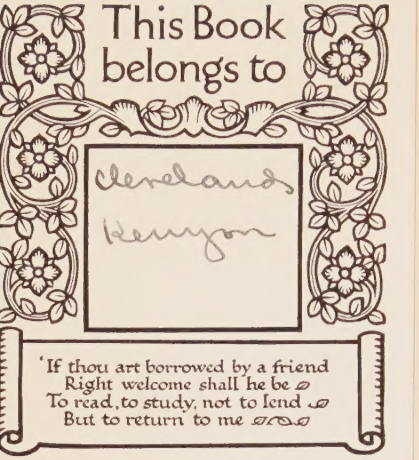
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belongs to
Cleveland
Kenyon
'If thou art borrowed by a friend
Right welcome shall he be
To read, to study, not to lend
But to return to me

The GODLIKE DANIEL

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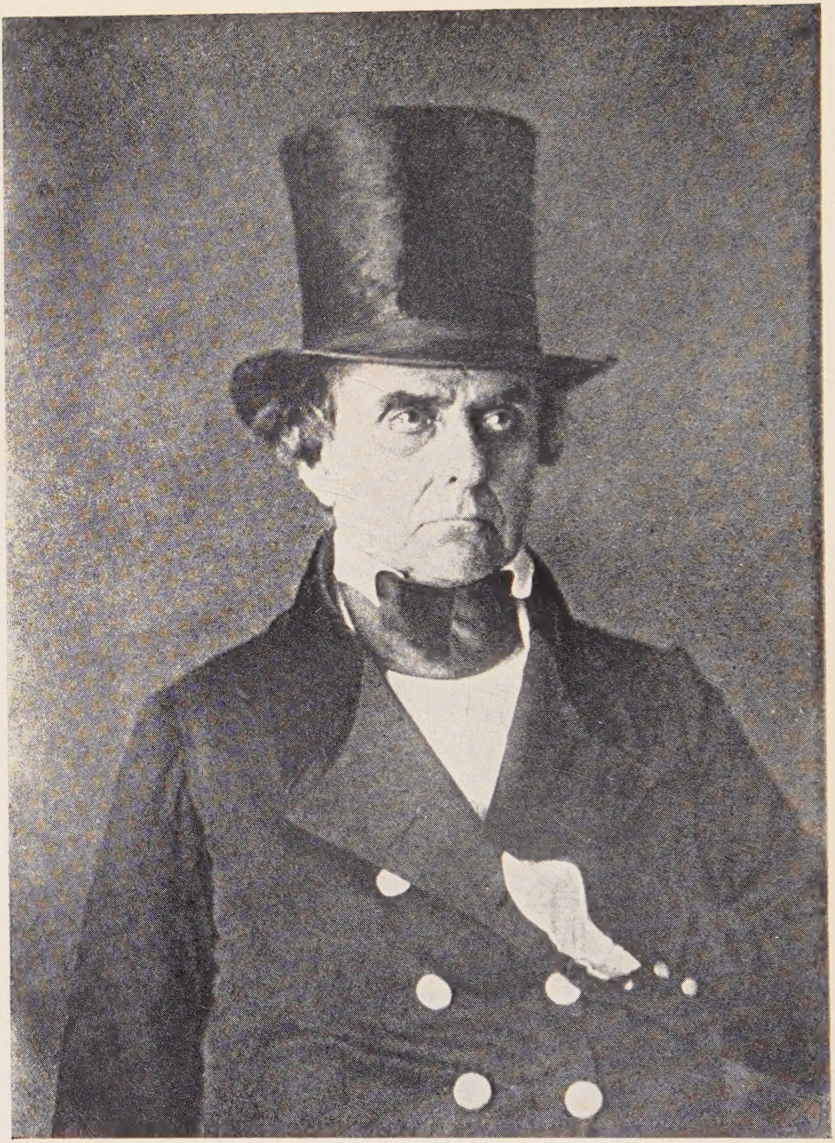

THE GODLIKE DANIEL

From a daguerreotype by F. De Berg Richards of Philadelphia taken in 1846.

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The GODLIKE DANIEL

By

SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS, L.H.D.

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PREFACE

THROUGH the first half of the Nineteenth Century stalks a figure so grandiose and refulgent that the tinted mists of legend have not yet ceased to cast their glow about it. Crowds and the sunlight followed it. Presidents were flattered by a visit. The public paid one hundred dollars a seat to view and hear it. Common acceptation estimated its height at several inches above the actual measure. Considered as a spectacle there has been nothing else so massive, lustrous, and titanic in the gallery of the American great as Daniel Webster.

Incense produces distorting fumes. Webster's contemporary biographers were so obsessed by the compulsive magnetism of the man that they have shrouded his true personality in the smoke screen of a slavish adulation. With the best intentions in the world, they have garbled, misinterpreted, and suppressed. Not content with glorifying their subject, they sought to sanctify him. The effect is merely to obscure him. The giant's robe, Webster could wear. The saint's halo is a misfit.

My study of this complex, potently influential, and profoundly histrionic character is intended not as an exhaustive record nor a historical summary but as an essay in portraiture. Controversial phases I have avoided, as alien to my purpose. There is a great mass of material gathered to prove that Webster's successful support of the Clay Compromise, the crucial and self-destructive climax of his career, saved the nation from imminent civil war. Analysis of the situation can be made to show, just as convincingly, that the South did not purpose a recourse to arms. The late Prof. Foster built up an ingenious support for the theory

that the famous Seventh of March speech was, in fact, a deliberate and noble abnegation of the statesman's ambition to be President. The main weakness of this contention is that Webster himself did not take that view of it; his subsequent course and words evince a fervid and over-optimistic hope of attaining the White House. Argument still rages as to whether he was an excessive drinker, and ministerial and other testimony to his moderation is adduced. But he himself never denied that he drank too much. His debts are excused as mere heedlessness when they were actually a systematic method of financing. To paint so robustious a character as his in the dainty pinks of watered pigments is to dehumanize the portrait as well as to belie the facts. It is charity, not history, that covers a multitude of sins.

In some details of treatment I have permitted myself the same latitude which Webster assumed in his imaginative reconstruction of the debate preceding the Declaration of Independence and the fictitious and ringing speech which he puts into the mouth of John Adams—by the average American still supposed to be an authentic Adams locution—a method which the Illustrious Daniel formally supported:

"The drawing of characters, consistent with general truth and fidelity, is no violation of historical accuracy; it is an illustration or an ornament."

A few of the dialogues in this book are imaginary; they bear the evidence of it upon their face; but based upon known facts and derived from inherent probabilities. Webster's own quoted utterances, except upon trivialities, reproduce or parallel the records. All letters and excerpts from speeches are taken from the best available authorities, most of them after examination of the original documents, and many important ones from data not hitherto published.

To the erudition and personal helpfulness of many librarians and experts I heartily acknowledge a debt of

gratitude. Possessing as a class the modesty of scholarship and having at heart the interests of their institutions rather than any personal recognition, they prefer that credit be given, not to the individual, but to the particular department of learning which he serves.

Therefore I return my thanks to the following institutions for special assistance:

American Antiquarian Society at Worcester, Mass., for its unique collection of newspaper material; Auburn, N. Y., Public Library; Boston Athenæum; Columbia University; Cornell University; Dartmouth College, for unrestricted access to the newly acquired Sanborn collection of Webster letters; Hamilton College; Harvard University, both the Widener and the School of Business libraries; Huntington Library of Pasadena, Calif.; Jacksonville, Fla., Public Library; Library of Congress; Massachusetts Historical Society; J. P. Morgan Library in New York City; New Hampshire Historical Society for many new, uncatalogued, and important documents; New York Public Library; Pennsylvania Historical Society; Portsmouth, N. H., Athenæum; Princeton University; Syracuse, N. Y., Public Library.

To Yale University, whose library, alone in my experience of such foundations, imposes upon the research worker a bargain, in spirit more mercantile than academic, acknowledgment is made for the use of one letter, and the prescribed obligation thus discharged.

To the Chamber of Commerce of the United States and to the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, I owe valuable aid in special research.

Samuel Hopkins Adams.

Auburn, N. Y.,
Aug. 3rd, 1930.

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The GODLIKE DANIEL

CHAPTER I

A RUSTIC ENTERS COLLEGE

DARTMOUTH PLAIN shimmered and sweltered in the haze of an August morning. Early though it was, the campus already exhibited a pleasant briskness. Figures, formal in broadcloth, linen, and patterned neckwear, emerged from the many-windowed dormitory to stroll across the broad, grassy open toward Olcott's Tavern. This was examination day, and collegiate tradition, as rigid in the prosperous and promising year of American self-satisfaction, 1797, as it is to-day, prescribed that one should confront the academic tests in the show of one's finest.

A gig clattered dustily along the campus street, veering wide to avoid the parade of smartness. It pulled up beside the old white church. From it climbed a youth, thin as a weasel, swarthy as a crow, pigeon-breasted and dome-browed. He spanceled out his nag to find what nutriment it might among the horses and oxen already cropping the parched grasses of the flat. From beneath the seat he lifted a wooden pail with a snug-fitting lid. This, the approved form of suitcase of the period, contained his wardrobe for the term. Inventory: 1 nightshirt, 1 pair extra stock-

ings, 1 suit underwear, 1 handkerchief, 1 neckerchief, 1 flannel waistcoat, 1 wooden hair comb, 1 packet small cotton cloths for polishing teeth.

The remainder of his outfit was on his back: a home-spun suit of dark, uncertain blue, a top-coat, high boots innocent of grease, and a coonskin cap. Compared with the fashionable students, he was bizarre and uncouth enough to attract notice. Two young girls passed him. His woods-trained ears caught their amused comment.

"What a figure of fun!"

"Doubtless an entrant in the Mooer's School for Aborigines."

"Truly he is black enough for an Indian."

"A couple of dainty ribs," thought the boy in the Scriptural slang of the day. "But where is their modesty?"

For their arms were blatantly nude to a point several inches above the elbow. The country lad could not know that this was the new fashion, reprehended by the conservative, indeed, but nevertheless extending its daring vogue even into academic circles. He wondered if they could be of that unknown and awesome guild known as "Cyprians." His surmise was wide of the truth. They were daughters of the Faculty and one of them, azure-eyed Mary Woodward, was the college beauty and toast, who was to trouble his thoughts through ten lonely years to come.

He was now to meet another and more formidable member of the family. The Hon. Belazeel Woodward, LL.D., head of the Board of Examiners, sat at a table with his fellows, on the second floor of the tavern. The room was redeemed from the profane atmosphere of an inn by an ecclesiastical-looking drapery over the Board table, bearing the legend

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE IN THE STATE
OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
VOX CLAMANTIS IN DESERTO

Dr. Woodward was an austere pundit, very dry of manner. Hardly acknowledging the low bow of the new arrival, he motioned him to a seat, until the human subject then up for dissection should be finished with. The youth waited, composedly looking about him at half a dozen others who were busily writing or staring with discouraged eyes at the wall. One of them seemed to have been weeping. It was not a cheery environment.

Presently he saw himself beckoned forward. Squaring his thin shoulders he stepped up to the rostrum. Four pairs of severe, professorial eyes conned him while he tried to bolster his soul with remembrance of his schoolmaster's final adjuration:

"Bear a bold front, boy; bear a bold front. Your Latin is no great thing, your Greek worse, and your geography, oh, fie! But you have the gift of the gab.

Make a glib tongue carry a lame mind. Examiners are but human."

These did not look so. Nor were they more favorably impressed with their subject—an awkward lath of a rustic, with something uncanny in his solemn, deep-set eyes, his coarse black hair and his glistening white teeth. Still, they had seen ripe scholars formed out of material rawer than this; they were open to conviction.

"You present yourself as candidate for entrance into the lowest or Freshman class?" This from the Hon. Belazeel.

"I do." The Board started, blinked, stared. To hear a voice so rotund, rich and confident issuing from that meager form was like being treated unexpectedly to a conjuror's tricksy. It pealed in the bare room like the deepest pipe of a church organ.

"Names, Christian and surname," pursued the chairman, recovering.

"Daniel Webster."

"Habitat?"

"Salisbury, in this State."

"Sponsors?"

"My father, Ebenezer Webster, and the Reverend Woods of Boscawen, a graduate of this foundation."

"Occupation of father?"

This produced a momentary break in the lad's self-confidence. "Judge of the Common Court," said he,

after a slight hesitation. This was the truth, if not the whole truth. Captain Eb Webster, proprietor of a "house of entertainment for man and beast" on the Franklin Pike, though without law or learning, sat with the court as a lay or "side" judge, in which capacity he was useful by virtue of his probity, his common sense and the regard in which he was held by his neighbors.

The Board canvassed young Webster's previous and sketchy education: common school, one term at Exeter Academy and special tutoring with the Reverend Woods; assured itself that the thirty pounds guaranty money (borrowed from the Governor of the State for the purpose) had been duly deposited with the college treasurer; approved the testimonials of moral character and religious status, and proceeded to examination. They gave him a bad two hours in geography, Greek Testament, the irritating Single Rule of Three, notation, Cicero, spelling in which he was excellent, Latin Prose, where he gave a fair performance, and Ancient History. Ill-grounded for the most part he might be, but his resourcefulness withstood all assaults; he was always pat with some kind of answer. Frequently it was wrong; seldom was it quite accurate, but invariably it was prompt, copious and fraught with an appealing effect of plausibility.

"This lout," commented the rough-tongued Prof. Nathan Smith, M.D., to the gentle and opulent Prof.

John Smith, A.M., "is like Barney Flynn's cockerel. The less he knows, the more he crows."

Young Daniel permitted himself a private grin. It was not the first time he had heard a similar opinion. The paternal inn-keeper, contrasting two of his sons, had been wont to say humorously, "Zeke can't tell the half of what he knows, but Dan can always tell more'n he knows." This with a chuckle of approbation for the younger son's ingenuity and adroitness. But the professorial comment was not so complimentary in tone. Beginning to feel uncertain and hot, the applicant loosed his neck-cloth. Presently he became aware of curious glances on the part of his interrogators. Dr. Woodward leaned over to speak to his neighbor.

"Do you observe anything peculiar, sir, in the appearance of the catechumen?"

"He seems to be turning a strange color, Doctor," replied Prof. John Smith.

"Young sir, are you unwell?" inquired the Chairman, bending forward to peer not unkindly through his silver box-spectacles at the figure before him.

"I am hale, sirs," returned the lad, not understanding this at all, "and prepared to proceed with the test."

"Blue as a pigmented Briton," barked Prof. Nathan Smith, M.D. "I recommend bleeding him at once."

The harassed youth brushed an arm across his beaded brow, leaving a wale of muddy indigo. There

was a laugh. Desperately but with candor and dignity he explained. Early that morning he had overtaken an inexpert traveler mired in a stream-bed. Having a way with horses, he had volunteered his aid. The tepid water, working upon home-dye in homespun had done its work. Mother Webster's colors had run liberally. There had been no time (nor material, for that matter) to change.

"Thus you see me as I am, gentlemen, entitled, if not to your approbation, at least to your sympathy," he pleaded.

The Hon. Belazeel chuckled. Prof. John Smith smiled kindly. Even the saturnine M.D. vouchsafed a grim smirk. There was a brief consultation and Daniel Webster of Salisbury swaggered out upon the campus, an accredited member of the class of Eighteen Hundred and One.

Some degree of swagger may be forgiven him. He was now an alumnus of no mean institution. His Alma Mater played an important part in the intellectual life of the nation, enriching it with a yearly crop of lawyers, clergymen, and pedagogues. Only Harvard and Yale exceeded it in size and equipment, and it boasted as many professors as the Massachusetts university, though fewer tutors. The undergraduate body numbered nearly one hundred and fifty students. There were four professors, three tutors, a chapel, a dormitory, a library, a college bell, two fraternities,

a set of regulations, and a deficit. The analogy to our modern college system is obvious.

The new undergraduate thought highly of his college. "Oxford and Cambridge, those Oriental stars of literature, shall now be lost," he prophesied in one of his early orations, "while the bright sun of American science displays his broad circumference in uneclipsed radiance."

It was an aristocratic community. All American colleges were, before the Nineteenth Century and well into it. Its President, the Hon. John Wheelock, was a gentleman not only of profound culture but of social prestige. Prof. John Smith was the richest man in the State outside of Portsmouth. The rest of the Faculty were known for elegance as well as erudition. To have a son pursuing the higher education there was a social asset for any family. Also a financial liability. Culture came high.

In the first place there was the thirty pounds deposit as guaranty for bills and Christian behavior. Tuition amounted to $19.80 per year, with commencement levy extra and an unpopular library tax of $1.20 whether one read the books or not. Arrears were taxed at eight per cent. Dormitory chambers cost $4.09 a term, with a penny-a-day fee for caretaking to Cesar Mullins, the campus blackamoor, if one were a blood. By boarding in the village a student could live for $1.50 a week, though perhaps not danger-

ously. Fines had to be reckoned in as inevitable though not reckonable expense of education. "*Cum vix justus sit securus*," wrote a disgruntled sufferer across the check with which he paid his penalties at term-end, and, indeed, the line from the "Dies Iræ" was pat to the facts: hardly could the most circumspect hope to evade all the costs of minor misbehavior. There were impositions for kicking a "footballe" in proximity to the college windows, for vulgar conversation or profane song, for the writing of letters provocative to a duel, for absence from stated exercises, for failure in proper respect or salutation to members of the College Governance, for conduct endangering the campus buildings or fence, and for picking the lock of a fellow student (fourpence).

Text-books were expensive; the cheapest speller cost 85 cents. Scholars must find their own ink, pen-nibs, paper, and chalk, but blackboards were generously provided by the institution, and there seems to have been no charge for depreciation or upkeep thereof. Chances in the college lottery (endorsed by pulpit, press and public) were not compulsory, any more than are to-day's contributions to the athletic fund; but the boy who did not go in for at least the minimum was regarded as a pretty petty sort of shirk, for thus were the salaries of Faculty and President—the latter no less than $747.00 per annum—eked out. There were fraternity dues (and fines) for the elect.

Altogether a boy could hardly get through in ease, comfort, and style for less than $125.00 a year. Some spent as high as $300.00, but these were liable to be cited before the Faculty for manifest extravagance in dress and deportment. There was a fine for that, also.

Yet, in some respects, standards were simple. The water system was comprised in a single pump, conveniently placed before the dormitory. Equidistant in the rear stood, if one may be permitted a polite anachronism, the college sanitation. Heating was achieved by wood-stoves, and, after October, communal endeavor kept the hallways piled with cord oak, two stacks to a hall. Cooking in the rooms was permitted. Students were allowed the privilege of washing their clothing and themselves in the contiguous Connecticut River. Pews were free in the church, though silver was expected in the plate.

The chapel, constructed by an architect of hardy Puritan standards, had no chimney and therefore no heating apparatus. On winter mornings, with the mercury ranging from zero downward twenty or thirty points, it was advisable and usual to take a drink before attending college worship. The average student expenditure for rum, "ginn," brandy, cordial and other hearty beverages, as preserved in the interesting day-book of J. Lang, General Merchandise, Hanover, N. H., would surprise and perhaps dismay a Congressional Investigating Committee of these pallid times.

It is not to be inferred, however, that all of this alcoholic activity was a necessary concomitant of chapel attendance. Much of it was social. For those who preferred lighter stimulants, a Sophomore named Grant ran a convenient beer, ale and cake shop on the ground floor of Dartmouth Hall.

At an earlier date the campus had been graced by a recitation hall even less comfortable than the chapel. Protests on the part of the student body having been ignored by the Governance, direct action followed. At dead of night, a lawless gathering, having assembled before the edifice, "rushed upon and prostrated it," as the President grievously reported to his shocked Trustees. One infers a certain instability in late Eighteenth Century collegiate architecture. The ruins of this early American pushover were permitted to remain in a state of prostration, the Trustees refusing to rebuild, and recitations were thenceforth held in the chapel, the professors' mansions, or sometimes the tavern.

Except in Freshman year, the course was flexible, not to say obliging. Language, with a slight sprinkling of religious instruction, made up the unalterable first year curriculum. After that there was a wide choice between history, logic, material and moral philosophy, theology, economics, chemistry, the *Ars Rhetorica* in profusion, a little natural history and a great deal of continued classics. More than half of

one class elected the junior course in medicine, under a Faculty of one, for no ascertainable reason except that they wished to, as none of them, as far as can be traced, became physicians. Possibly it was a "snap" course.

Religious observances were insisted upon, but of genuine religious sentiment there seems to have been little enough. One class in Webster's time could show but a single professing Christian. "Barbecuing the Scriptures" was a favorite form of college dramatics, and more than one "Humorous and Risible Dialogue" was presented on Commencement stage which inspired the respectable with horror. In a much applauded performance, a character parodying clerical dress proclaimed that "Shadrach's fundiment was het hot as Satan's oven" and when his fellow player protested at such heresy, belabored him simultaneously with an inflated bladder and distorted texts, "a scene wounding to Christian piety" as the protesting church element reported. The blight of censorship descended upon this form of dramatic activity, and a dialogue in which our Daniel was to have appeared as participant was withdrawn. But this may have been for reasons other than religious scruples.

Indeed, he was probably more religious than the generality of his fellows. Testimony is available that he regularly attended chapel, which means little, as the alternative was a fine; and also church, which was a matter of choice. He was naturally a formalist and

an upholder of all respectable institutions. At home he was brought up on Watts, Bible memorizing, and the brimstone hymnology of Sternhold & Hopkins. His mother, a stern and rockbound old dame, was presumably church-minded and her son may well have inherited the tendency. Certainly he was heedful in his language and if he had occasion to mention His Satanic Majesty in writing, took no chances but habitually referred to him as "the D—l."

As to his place and standing in college, much is obscure because of a propaganda of glorification and obscurantism which rises about his course like a pillar of cloud by day and night and culminates in a mysterious, sensational, and impermeably preserved secret. All his life people lied loyally about Daniel Webster. But nowhere else in his career is there to be found mendacity so concerted and organized as the testimony of his surviving college mates, adduced at a time when the great orator and statesman had become an almost legendary figure while still alive. If one is to credit these reminiscent data, so well intended, the undergraduate Daniel must have been a pattern of the most flawless and repellent propriety; instead of which, he was a popular and rather rambunctious youth. The evidence of his adoring contemporaries is about ninety per cent fraudulent.

His own is better, though confusing and contradictory. Except when irritated, he does not have a great

opinion of himself as a scholar. All that he knew of the higher mathematics, he admits, could be collected on the pupil of a knat's * eye without causing the creature to wink. His languages were probably better—and yet: "I brought from college a very scanty inheritance of Latin," he says in one letter, only to controvert himself surprisingly in another: "My Latin was pretty strong." But let a detractor impute poor scholarship to him, and he is up in arms for self-defense. "I studied and read more than all the rest of my class if they had all been made into one man. And," he admits frankly, "I was as much above them then as I am now."

Opinion, autobiographical or other, aside, a few facts stand out. One is that he was the best orator of his day, and this is the more striking because at Exeter he had miserably broken down from stage fright, and fled weeping from a rostrum which he could never thereafter be persuaded to remount. He spent much time in the Library, reading widely on topics of the day, and he there developed a style of composition the richest and most copious in college. As to his academic standing, we have reasonably certain evidence as to one year only, the first. As a Freshman he assumed and maintained an impregnable position—at the foot of his class.

Fifty years after his graduation, the astute and ruth-

* The spelling is his own considered version after partial erasure.

less James Parton described him in his library "overflowing with every kind of knowledge that can be acquired without fatigue and received without preparation." Probably that is a fair enough pattern of his college course. In an immediate retrospect of it, he himself remarks that his scholarship was overestimated by his fellows; that his special ability subsisted in making the best showing of what equipment he possessed. So well does this agree with the paternal appraisal, that I think we may accept it as the best available estimate.

So much for the curricular record of Dartmouth's foremost alumnus. His extra-curricular career is more definitely preserved to us.

CHAPTER II

DARTMOUTH, 1801

FOR all except rare minds predestined to scholarship, the most potently formative influences of a college course are likely to be found parallel to, rather than included in, the academic requirements. Such was the case with Webster. Classic Dartmouth's college halls did less for him than classic Dartmouth's lively campus. At the foot of his class in early scholastic performance, he probably absorbed as much of the influence of his environment as any other member of it.

His first step up was his admission to the severely selective United Fraternity. It was a marked day in his life when, his twelve shillings' initiation fee paid, he pinned to his swelling vest the heart-shaped gold badge with the interclasped hands above the mystical diphthong Æ, which admitted him to fellowship with the college's choicest spirits. In advance, he undertook to abstain from "conduct detrimental to friendship, benevolence and good order," forswore any and all "behavior uncharacteristical of a gentleman," and covenanted to be both diligent and earnest in the prescribed literary and forensic exercises.

These were of impressive range. The fraternity debated such diverse topics as "Should a Scholar Attend as Much to Modern as to Ancient Writings?"—"Is Marriage Productive of Happiness?"—"Would Treaties of Commerce Be of Advantage to the United States?"—"Ought Part of the Human Race to Be Slaves to the Rest?"—"Are Great Riches a Source of Permanent Satisfaction?"—and "Does Dancing Corrupt the Deportment?" In such congenial exercises young Daniel was more interested and active than in his classroom work. He even substituted for delinquents when opportunity offered. It was observed by his contemporaries that he never missed a chance to speak "on any topic whatsoever, whether he knew anything about it or not," the hallmark of the genuine oratorical temperament. This distinguished him from the generality of his associates, whose usual procedure (if Brother Secretary's records are trustworthy) was to report "Unprepared" and pay the assessed fine. Such moneys went into a book fund which prospered so exceedingly that soon the fraternity's collection rivaled the College Library.

Though a loyal adherent, Daniel was no rancorous partisan. When a feud arose between the United Fraternity and the Social Friends over the "lifting" of a member, he maintained amicable relations with members of the rival organization. In fact, he lived a sort of communal life with several of them in Dart-

mouth Hall where the group, having sawed openings in the partitions to connect up their rooms, shared indiscriminately their food, bedding, firewood, weapons, text-books, and apparel. First up, best dressed was their accepted principle.

Here dwelt Bingham, the musician, his bass-viol piously inscribed with its name, "Laus Deo," across its fair, round belly: Sanford Kingsbury, the campus dandy, Aaron Loveland, Webster's roommate, Habijah Fuller, ambitious for his D.D., Mighell Blood, the ladies' man, Jabez Whitaker, a sporting character with a ferret, Alpheus Baker, who kept a horseshoe over his door to discourage witches, Nathaniel Shattuck, author of some of those dialogues, "wounding to Christian piety" which roused the churchly element, and several others, mostly of the class of 1801. Here Conkey, Howe, and Webster gave a party which did not break up until the scandalous hour of 9.30 P.M. It was the event of the season and what with brandy at six shillings the gallon, "ginn" twopence more, lemons (a desperate luxury) at four shillings a dozen, cherry rum as well as rum of Santa Cruz, small-beer for the abstinent from Grant's ground-floor shop, tobacco and snuff for the ultra-sophisticates, cakes, candles, napery and breakage, the whole stylish affair came to two pounds, nine shillings and fivepence, on the books of J. Lang, merchant. It must have enlarged the paternal tavern-keeper's notions as to the

scope of a classical education when he received Mr. Lang's first bill, though he settled it without protest. Later he gave notes. Later still he just stopped paying.

Daniel's social activities were by no means exclusively stag. He became a figure in the town's limited but superior circles. The girls nicknamed him "All-Eyes" as he records with coy satisfaction; he preferred this to his campus sobriquets, "Black Dan" or "Indian Dan." Mary Woodward was the object of his special devotion, but he seems never to have progressed far with her. Dashing she may have been in the matter of short sleeves, but otherwise she was a prudent maiden. She extended him no favors. "As lovely as Heaven, and harder to obtain," laments the stricken youth. Perhaps in her school days she had listened heedfully to a lecture specially prepared for young ladies' seminaries by another Webster, the learned lexicographer, Noah, who solemnly warned the budding female of the species on "The Perils of Seduction"; or, if not, she almost certainly had read that sterling romance, "Charlotte Temple," then well on its way to a hundredth edition, and absorbed its moral and alarming teachings about the dangerous male. On the other hand there is some reason for believing that she simply preferred one of Daniel's classmates. He turned to an unnamed local charmer for solace, possibly on the principle of taking a line of less resist-

ance, for we find him darkly hinting later that his honor was involved and that he may feel obligated to sacrifice his own happiness to that of another. Nothing came of it. Nor did he cease to sigh over Mary's blue eyes and inquire anxiously about her status for years after graduation.

Sartorially he becomes a changed person. At Exeter the unhappy boy's "rustic manner and unfashionable raiment had drawn upon him the ridicule of some of his associates." No more of that for our budding collegian. J. Lang carries a full line of fashionable clothing and D. Webster figures liberally upon his books. That pail, which so easily accommodated the lad's wardrobe upon arrival, would have burst its lid and its sides as well under the pressure of his first Commencement outfit. We may figure him in a coat of fine broadcloth, garnished with the largest of pearl buttons, gracefully rolled back from a waistcoat of the fanciest pattern, bright with galloon trimmings and snugged in with buttons only less glorious than those of the chief garment. His trousers are fawn-hued and fitted with scrupulosity to the figure. His shirt is of fine sarsenet and his neckerchief of the freshly imported bandanna design, and—final touch of campus elegance—the whip, which was then carried in lieu of a cane, has a thong of braided bright silks. Thus, the complete maccaroni, he mingles with the crowds which have flocked in from the surrounding country to

get drunk and overtax the limited accommodations of the Hanover jail, for this is not only an academic symposium, but also, for the countryside, the glorious raree-show of the year, colorful with gypsy wagons, Indian mogesan-vendors, fairing booths, drinking stalls, the tents of quack medicine barkers who dispense cure-alls and bawdy jokes, the tables of the light-fingered specialists in thimble-and-pea, itinerant midwives, and peddlers of all kinds; and one may spend a pound on the college lottery or a shilling on a view of the Massive Oriental Elephant which has paused, en route, to fill a "special engagement with the President and Faculty of Harvard University."

In such surroundings the young elegant and his fraternity brothers will be proud figures. Yet he never wholly sloughed off that *gaucherie* which was the inheritance of his cruel humiliations at school. Aaron Loveland, who alone of his mates maintained the hardihood of frankness about the great man (and was soundly berated for it by the cult of hero-worshipers), records that "Dan was rough and awkward, very decidedly. Yet there was something rather assuming and pompous in his bearing as well as his style. He was and felt himself to be a kind of oracle." An oracle he was held to be by his admiring fellows, and an authority. When an itinerant dancing master visited Hanover with a view to professional activities, the students to whom he applied for information ad-

vised him, "You had better consult Mr. Webster and be guided by his counsel." Loveland mentions also that he took pains to make the acquaintance of any notables who might be visiting the college. Doubtless the deep-eyed, rich-voiced, deliberate and oracular youngster would have interested and impressed them.

As to his amusements, we can only guess. Athletics in the team and competitive sense were far in the future. The boys got their exercise as hewers of wood and drawers of water. He may have taken part in kicking an eight-penny, cloth-stuffed "footballe" about the Plain, or played Anthony-over with a home-made batting-leather. More likely he pitched horse-shoes. In winter he would naturally take part in the snow-battles which were improvised when one of the rare thaws broke the stringency of the season, and he doubtless hunted along the mountainsides, rich in game: coon, bear, deer, some birds, and the big, agile, tireless snow-shoe rabbits. Convivial he was, too; the Conkey-Howe-Webster party was by no means his only essay at entertainment. His liquor bills at Lang's were perhaps no higher than the average of his set, but as representing the alcoholic capacity of a boy of seventeen or eighteen, they would stagger the modern sense of propriety.

Presumably he found his principal recreation in the exercise of his gift for words. Contemporary athleti-

cism was not that of leg and arm but of mind and tongue. Oratory was the major college sport at Dartmouth and Black Dan was its triple threat. With equal readiness and power he could exhibit an oration, maintain a forensic dispute, or deliver an elegant disquisition. While still an underclassman, he was Independence Day orator at the Hanover town celebration, where his address was an hour and forty minutes long, a praiseworthy effort for a tyro, though it did not threaten the existing records. Before his Sophomore year was over, he was conceded to be the best speaker in college. Thus he early achieved the special kudos among his fellows which would now be enjoyed only by the captain of the football team.

In the summer of 1799, our Sophomore encountered Moses Davis. Davis, probably a Dartmouth graduate himself, and certainly a man of education, was the town and college printer and the founder of the *Dartmouth Gazette*. The paper had no official connection with the college. It was purely a private enterprise, in politics staunchly Federalist, in literary tone elegant and elevated, in propriety unimpeachable, in which latter respect it differed from some of its New Hampshire contemporaries. So sedulous was Mr. Davis to avoid even the appearance of offense, that he censored the careless rapture of a poetical contributor to this effect:

Oh, might my arm enclose thy w—st!

One can only surmise what he might have done had he been confronted with the problem of a lady's l—gs; probably he would have omitted them altogether. His paper was, typically, a four-sheet weekly, of standard size except when rag paper prices were up or payments slow; then its area shrank.

Journalism at the close of the Eighteenth Century, when Webster first dipped into it, was concerned less with matter than with manner. News was not the first essential, having usually been exhausted of interest and freshness at the village tavern and the church sewing bee before it could attain to print. An American vessel might fight off an attack of pirates, a frontier family be wiped out by drunken redskins, or a European government change; a paragraph or two would cover the event, whereas an editorial disquisition on "The Power of the Mind" or "Religion in the Home" was good for a turn-over on the first page.

Columnists flourished. Poor, indeed, was that publication which could not offer a department of literary or informative miscellany, and a joke-box of humorous anecdote with the italics marking the spot where the laugh was to be found. In these special columns one might find out "What to Do if Struck by Lightning," enjoy an excerpt from Tabitha Tenney's latest romance, or profit esthetically by original or clipped contributions in verse dealing with Innocence, Mother Love, Melancholy, or the local flora. Ex-

changes were widely and liberally drawn upon. The shears were mightier than the pen, and paste thicker than ink.

Already itching with the desire to write, Daniel heard of Moses Davis's proposed enterprise with a quickening heart. He lost no time in presenting himself to the ambitious printer. Some sort of bargain was struck. The outcome of the interview appeared in the *Gazette*.

"Mr. Davis:

"Having seen your proposal for printing a Newspaper, under the respectable title of the *Dartmouth Gazette*, I have presumed to come forward and cast in my mite to encrease if not to enrich your weekly repast. Should you think the productions of my puerile pen worthy a place in your new 'vehicle of knowledge' you may depend on a number weekly. As I am unable to treat any subject with that knowledge and accuracy it deserves, you will permit me, as a compensation for want of abilities, to range the whole field of nature, in order to collect those productions, which fortune may throw in my way. With the most sincere wishes for your success, I subscribe myself, ever your's, "Icarus."

Thus began a curiously irregular and unreliable collaboration between the printer and the student. In

that highly romanticized work of the imagination, Webster's "Autobiography," the great man, looking condescendingly back at his youthful days, takes a lofty tone regarding his journalistic activities: "I even paid my board for a year by superintending a little weekly newspaper and making selections for it." And he vaguely thinks that he may have written original matter, too. He did. Over the signature, "Icarus," appear thoughts on such approved subjects as "Charity," "Fear," "Hope," "Dissimulation," "Spring," and "Patriotism," as well as an occasional political editorial. The style is no better or worse than the general run of the paper; it is characterized by all that windy eloquence and uplifted sentiment without which no prose of the period could move in the best circles. There is a total lack of the splendid and rhythmic periods of his mature oratory.

The paper's special departments, "Seat of the Muses," "Miscellany," and "Cabinet of Comus," show signs of the Icarian influence, and we know that he wrote the annual "Newsboys Appeal," an outlet for partisan display as well as a bid for holiday benevolence, in that sure-footed and jingling rhyme which always came so easy to him. More serious subjects, also, inspired his muse, and I think we may safely ascribe to him an elegiac poem, lacking his usual signature but marked with his special style, on the death of a classmate:

He ceased, and ghastly Death like lightning flies,
His Master's will obeys, and SIMONDS DIES.
His feet on *Dartmouth* Plain shall tread no more,
Nor from his lips proceed intrinsic lore.

As for "superintending" the publication, the autobiographical memory must be at fault. The term implies some regularity of attention. This Icarus certainly did not bestow. From the outset the good printer had his troubles with his pet contributor. "Since our first number Icarus has taken his flight and no intelligence can be obtained respecting him." The absentee reappeared with an apology, but presently the editor has cause for complaint again regarding "Icarus, a changeable being." Contributions came in regularly for a time. Then, "Icarus, where art thou?" demands Mr. Davis in editorial appeal. But whenever the prodigal did return, he was welcomed back with preferred position and the best font of type.

These absences are difficult to account for, particularly as they occur in term time, and "cutting" college exercises was not lightly regarded in those days. The delinquent himself refers to his "eccentric flights." To these is perhaps due his unimpressive class record. In one instance, at least, there was an economic reason. The undergraduate found a chance to earn a bit of money as substitute pedagogue for two weeks and departed (in Kingsbury's new beaver hat) to teach school

down-river. On another occasion the impulse to absence must have been a powerful one, as it caused him to miss one of those opportunities dearest to his heart, the delivery of a public oration representing his fraternity. Possibly he may have been picking up a bit here and there, speaking at local gatherings in the not-too-distant locality. That would have helped. Patriotic orators' fees ran as high as five dollars. In his Sophomore year he was an organizer of the Federalist Club, made up, by its own admission, exclusively of "such as deserve the name of Philanthropists, Gentlemen, and Scholars."

Oration fees or any other money would be very handy. With the young and self-indulgent Daniel, expenditure always outran assets. His standards of living bore no ratio to his financial status. He was heavily in debt on Lang's books, for room furnishings, pearl buttons, and expenses of the life social. His college dues were in arrears. He was borrowing of his fellows. Everybody did. It took him years to square his accounts at Hanover. "Mister * has sent oooo to Mr. Lang and I don't believe he will; I don't honestly see how he can," which is clear in purport if queer in syntax. It would not weigh heavily upon the easy-going inn-keeper. The fiscal policy of the Webster

* "Mister" is the term habitually employed by the Webster boys, Dan and Zeke, among themselves in referring to Ebenezer Webster. When Daniel refers to him otherwise, he uses quotation marks; i.e., "Father." The curious may guess why. I find no clue. There is not the slightest reason for doubting the legitimacy of either son.

household was rooted in a blithe and optimistic improvidence.

So we see, in fitful glimpses, the boy Daniel, as he was when he reached his year of graduation, aged nineteen; restless, quick-witted, absorptive; a bit of a fop, a bit of a prig, perhaps even a bit of a snob; a touch of Sir Oracle about him; a little lordly, a little aloof, already cultivating that special gift of tongue; not conscious yet of that supermagnetism of personality which, more than any other attribute, was to carry him so far; inclined to shirk all prescribed effort; capricious and unreliable in his engagements; enthusiastic in such pursuits as enlisted his special interest; addicted, with the easy Webster habit of debt, to other people's money; never better than an ordinary classroom scholar, but a passionate addict to the library; ingenious in excuses; something of a ladies' man; social in his tastes, and a hearty drinker. For the rest, he stands higher in the regard of his fellows than of the Faculty, with a precocious and unusual dignity and authority, exacting respect, enjoying popularity, loyal, friendly, formally pious, tolerant, gay-tempered and luxurious in taste. Above all, impressive, and probably with calculation. Most of these attributes endured throughout his life.

His triumphant college career ended in a dire and puzzling fizzle. He, the ablest writer, the most fluent orator, the leading spirit of the campus, president of

the principal fraternity, was passed over for the Salutatory which had been universally regarded as his beyond competition; and not only this, but he was absolutely ignored in the Commencement exercises. Why? Not absence. Nor incapacity. He was present and delivered a eulogy on a deceased classmate at the public proceedings of the United Fraternity. Surmise may hover over the size of that liquor bill at Lang's, with the suggestive corollary that something impelled him to go teetotal after graduation. Or his failure may be attributed to his previous truancies: he had disappointed expectations at an earlier Commencement. Whether or not the deep-buried truth be discreditable, it was obviously unpleasant. The person most interested treats of it (with his occasional trick of slipping into the third person) briefly and with distaste, but with no weakness of self-exculpation:

> "Owing to some difficulties which he remembers with no satisfaction (*haec non meminisse juvat*) he took no part in Commencement exercises in August, 1801."

A sort of class bolt was organized as a testimonial of resentment. Silence, the most difficult form of loyalty, was the tribute of his fellows to Black Dan. All the twenty-eight members of 1801 must have known something of the circumstances; many others in college, also, for the sensational disappointment of a gen-

eral expectation would have been universally discussed. Consider the temptation in the after years when their companion had become the most imposing figure in the nation, for some of his intimates to win a little easy glory by the "I-can-tell-you-the-real-facts" method. The true story was never told. Lame explanations were, indeed, offered, in the carefully collated (and carefully edited, as well?) data from his contemporaries. Their disingenuousness is proven by the more honest, if no more revelatory, Webster himself.

The secrecy with which the actual facts have been preserved is phenomenal. It is like the inviolability which enshrines a fraternity password. I know of no other instance of group-loyalty to set beside it. The lad for whose sake the unwritten compact was so rigidly maintained must have possessed rare, one is tempted to say royal, qualities. There must have been about him, if not a divinity, at least a humanity that hedged his kingship from outside aspersions. Other loyalties like this followed and protected him through his career, though not always so successfully.

Four salient inceptions characterize this college period. Webster began to speak. He began to write. He began to borrow. And he began to drink. In spite of all the intemperate denials and equally damaging exculpations as to his indulgences put forth by the biographical idolaters who early perpetuated and grotesquely misrepresented his memory, I think that

the drink habit was less significant, and certainly less influential in its effect upon his career, than the debt habit. The importance of his transformation from a tongue-tied failure on the school platform to a profuse and applauded performer on the college platform and the political hustings is obvious. As to his writing, that represents a partly thwarted ambition. He would have liked to be an author. In fact, he never abandoned the idea. Of journalism he was a little ashamed. Nevertheless he remained secretly and actively a journalist to the end of his life. Moses Davis had more to do with forming Daniel Webster than the Hon. John Wheelock, LL.D., and all the learned Faculty of Dartmouth.

CHAPTER III

A SLOW START

MANY men of many minds were making, for the ambitious graduate of 1801 to inherit, an America of whose future they had only the vaguest preconceptions. Five millions strong, they were multiplying and spreading; industrious and mercantile-minded Massachusetts men, intellectual and aristocratic Virginians, cantankerous Connecticut politicians, money-making, interest-charging Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers combining the dogged selfishness of the Dutch and the enterprise of the English, lordly agriculturalists of the Carolinas, shaggy outlanders of the Northwestern Territory; a various mass of humanity somehow surviving the rigors of climate, disease, and four-hour sermons, and successfully assimilating the land and its bounty by dint of pioneering, felling, plowing, shipping, huckstering, home-doctoring, exorcising witches, shooting Indians, horse-trading, money-changing and electioneering, all for their own profit and advancement and the greater glory of their separate States. Hardly had they begun to think of themselves as Americans first.

Life seemed rich and peaceful to them, on land, by comparison with the smoldering crater of war across the Atlantic. Afloat, the American status was less comfortable and more mortifying. Both French and English were playing gay and piratical hob with our commerce, and the Yankee skipper on the high seas led the life of a minnow in a pickerel-pond. Anywhere short of the actual pierhead, his ship was liable to be held up and his seamen impressed into marine slavery. No relief was in sight except through the desperate recourse to arms. But whom to challenge? Some said France. Others said England. The rabid said both. The sensible—and they were fortunately in the majority—said neither.

For a young and ardent Federalist just emerging from college, it was by no means the best of all possible worlds. Both by apprenticeship to the *Gazette* and by inherited associations, our graduate was Federalist to the bone. Washington had always been the family hero. There was a tribal tradition regarding the Revolutionary service of Ebenezer, the father, not too well supported by evidence, but handsomely set forth in after recollections of the son, that the Captain had been singled out by the Commander-in-Chief for special confidence and compliment. "I know I shall be safe with you on guard, Captain Webster."

Now the wise and great ex-President was dead, and the *Dartmouth Gazette* had marked the sad event with

a poem whose striking combination of piety, poesy, and patriotism issued from some other muse than that of Icarus:

> Washington, the brave,
> Has gone *down* to the grave,
> But *up* shall have a hoist
> By CHRIST.

His successor, John Adams, bedeviled and betrayed by a double-dealing Cabinet, had been supplanted by his own Vice-President, crying out upon him lamentably as he left the Executive Mansion, "You have turned me out! You have turned me out!" Jefferson was in command, and the scandal-mongers of the opposition were prophesying that he would bring to Washington the lovely octoroon "plaicer," supposed to be the romance of his unrepentant life, and turn the rest of the country over to revolutionary mobs in the red bonnets of the Commune.

> "We have now [declared a Federalist Jeremiah from Connecticut] reached the consummation of Democratic blindness. We have a country governed by blockheads and knaves; the ties of marriage, with all its felicities, are severed and destroyed; our wives and daughters are thrown into the stews; our children are cast into the world from the breast, forgotten: filial piety is extinguished; and our surnames, the only mark of distinction among families, are abolished.

Can the imagination paint anything more dreadful, this side of Hell?"

It was really not so bad as all that. The Federalists could claim a majority if not a monopoly of "the rich, the well-born, and the able," particularly in New England where their power and influence were still dominant, though waning. Young Webster was dubious about their prospects and his own continued adherence.

"I can't say whether I have any politics at all," wrote the lad who was later to display as wide and various a diversity of politics as any statesman of his day.

As to occupation, he was in the same quandary. How and where to pick up a livelihood? After getting his diploma, he found nothing better to do than to return to the tavern on the pike. There and on the farm of which it was a part, he had been the family pet, a bit of a spoiled child, excused on the ground of delicate health from the hardships of field work, shown off as a prodigy to the admiring teamster-patrons from a table-top where he spouted stanzas from "Chevy Chase" or delivered long memorizations from the Bible. Pleasant though the recollections may have been, after the years of broadcloth, silken whiplashes, and six-shilling "ginn," home life must have seemed monotonous and shabby. He would feel the *res an-*

gustæ domi pinch narrowly, indeed, upon his easeful college habits. And, we may guess, he would be less the household favorite than in his underdeveloped childhood, now that he was as robust as the other nine children.

After all, there was no great glory attached to his home-coming. Merely because he was college-graduated, his mother, a gaunt, dour, formidable woman, would hardly deal out the midday porridge more generously to him than to the others. If there is any information to be drawn from the craggy chin and disciplinary nose of her silhouette, she was not that kind of materfamilias.

The prodigal who returns clad in soft raiment and full of fatted calf cannot gracefully complain if he gets the husks for his portion. Economically Dan was one too many. The Webster finances, going from bad to worse, were well on the downward road to the bankruptcy in which they culminated. Obviously it was desirable that the expensive and unpaid-for education should justify itself in the practical form of a job. The young man set about "making a little interest in some places to the eastward for employment." Meantime he read law in the office of a jurist named Thompson, the man who had first incited his boyish ambition to thoughts of a liberal education. It was a painful interregnum. He describes himself as "sunken in indifference and apathy." These attacks of blues, pos-

sibly attributable to sluggish liver, recurred throughout his life, even in his most prosperous periods.

From this early one he sought surcease in "the weed," and wrote an ode about it beginning:

Come, then, Tobacco, new-found friend!

But his new-found friend treacherously turned upon him at the second bout with the plug—this being an experiment in chewing—and he abandoned the venture though he finished the ode.

Still, there were compensations, chief among them the companionship of his brother Ezekiel, whom he adored. Brother Zeke was a specimen of early American which has few survivals. Modest and reserved, in spite of striking personal beauty, uniting nobility of character with joyousness of temperament, he had one failing of the Webster breed, irresponsibility in money matters. Daniel, by no means given to self-depreciation, thought his brother equal to him in mental capacity, probably an exaggeration, and superior to him in character, doubtless a just estimate. Although older than Dan, he followed him to college and thence into the law, wherein he had already attained a high position of recognition and respect, when he dropped dead in court. The Webster boys' correspondence, Dan-to-Zeke, Zeke-to-Dan, furnishes an admirable pattern of the young manhood of a century-and-a-quarter ago; so blithe it is, so clean-hearted and high-

spirited with its indomitable chuckles over adversity, its sturdy optimism, its defiant idealism and its determination to make the best of good hap or ill.

Farm duties kept Zeke busy at Salisbury. For his truant hours Dan could fall back on his old chum, Robert Bruce, ex-soldier of and double deserter from the British arms, who had inspired his childhood with love and knowledge of woodcraft, a source of delight and refreshment which he never thereafter lost. Very likely they resumed the old bargain: Bruce to take Dan to the likeliest grouse and woodcock cover and the most populous trout-holes along the local brooks, Punch, Wigwag, and Stirrup-Iron; Dan to read the newspapers to the old campaigner, who was illiterate.

It all ended when the "little interest to the eastward" fructified in the offer of a country school at Fryeburg. The pay was three hundred and fifty dollars a year. Webster accepted, and more than earned the salary, for the gratified trustees gave him a bonus of five dollars at Commencement. He added from a dollar to two dollars a week to his income by transcribing the town records, of evenings. His conduct was exemplary and his tastes more frugal than in college. On the local store ledger is shown neither brandy, "ginn," nor rum, whether of Santa Cruz or Jamaica, to his account; not even wine or small-beer. There are many entries of the innocent raisin, some of segars, tobacco having proven more friendly in this

form, and one of a gold ring. If this presaged marriage, as one letter strongly hints, something went wrong. The rebuff, if it were that, left the youthful spirit uncrushed.

At Fryeburg he delivered the annual Independence Day oration on the Common, a political effort which is reported to have gratified the Federalists and dismayed the Democrats. Therefore, we may assume that he had ceased drifting politically and come to anchor at his original moorings. The finale of his address so commended itself to his riper judgment, that he repeated it fifty years later, in a form slightly edited but hardly improved.

Literature was beckoning him, probably in its oratorical phase. What might not be expected of a career in which a tyro could get five dollars for a pleasurable two hours of eloquence? Brother Zeke approved his ambition, though with reservations, quoting Dr. Johnson:

> Yet think what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Pride, envy, want, a patron and the jail.

Already Daniel knew pride and want. Envy he was to appreciate in the measure of his greatness. Not a patron but a multitude of patrons later bound the giant in a golden net. And once in his after life he must have felt, with the horrified revulsion of the man guiltless in intent, the chill possibility of the jail. But it was not through pursuit of the scholar's career.

Back to Salisbury after the close of the school year. Why, it is impossible to say. Everything seemed to indicate the advisability of sticking to the lucrative Fryeburg job. As we have seen, the authorities were more than pleased with him. Ezekiel needed his continued help at college. The ageing Ebenezer, trying again to "hire a few hundreds" from Governor Gilman, had poorer luck than on his first attempt. Zeke found himself on short rations, though the younger brother had generously helped him out at least once.

> "Money, Daniel, money. As I was walking down to the office after a letter, I happened to find one cent which is the only money I have had since the second day after I came on. It is a fact, Daniel, that I was called on for a dollar where I owed it, and borrowed it, and have borrowed it four times since, to pay those I borrowed of.
>
> "Yours without money,
>
> "E. WEBSTER."

Here we have, in the simplicity of perfection, the Webster code of finance. Ebenezer had begun it. Ezekiel carried on the tradition:

> A liberal youth, whose speculative skill
> Is hasty credit and a distant bill.

Daniel made it a life principle.

If Zeke was hard up, Daniel was only less so. From

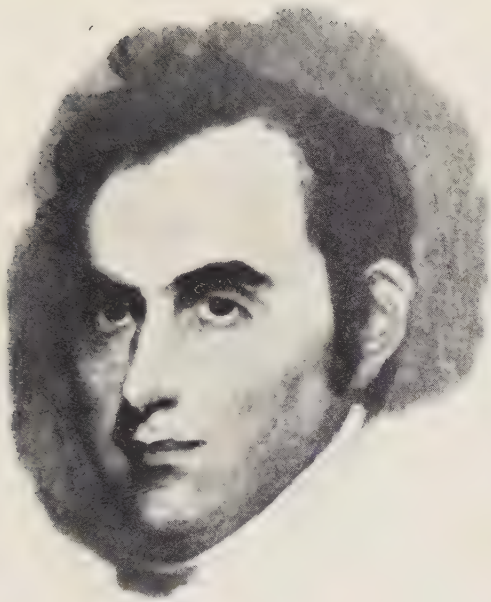
Fryeburg he had written to Habijah Fuller, his classmate:

> "You will naturally inquire how I prosper in the matter of cash. Finely! I came here in January with a horse and watch, etc., and a few 'rascally counters' in my pocket. Was soon obliged to sell my horse and live on the proceeds. Still straitened for cash, I sold my watch, and made a shift to get home, where my friends supplied me with another horse and another watch. My horse is sold again, and my watch goes, I expect, this week; thus you see how I lay up cash. If Cook or some one else does not come to relieve me, I shall be so rich that I shall be worth just nothing at all."

What became of all that three hundred and fifty dollar wage, plus the increment of the fair-hand copying? Necessary expenses in Fryeburg cannot account for as much as half of it. Did all the rest go to help Zeke? If so, how could he have been so hard put to it? It is all part of the Webster fiscal mystery which we shall see developing through the years.

If Dan was badly off in Fryeburg, he was worse in Salisbury. From there he answers his brother's Macedonian cry for cash:

> "I have now by me two cents in lawful federal currency. Next week I will send them if they



STUART LOOKS BENEATH THE SURFACE
From the painting by Gilbert Stuart about 1822.
(Reproduced by courtesy of New York Public Library)

be all; they will buy you a pipe; with a pipe you can smoke; smoking inspires wisdom: wisdom is allied to fortitude: from fortitude it is but one step to stoicism: and stoicism never pants for this world's goods: so perhaps my two cents by this process may put you quite at ease about cash."

In his need he revived Icarus, for his friend and journalistic mentor, Moses Davis, and also did some hack-work for the *Courier of New Hampshire*, a violently partisan sheet with a Rabelaisian taste in the humor of personalities. If the earnings of his pen paid his board at home, they did no more. All that held him to Salisbury was the double disability that he had too many debts and too few clothes to get away. Boston was the goal upon which he had set his desire. There he might continue his studies in the law, with added opportunities.

Family pressure, rather than any inner impulse, had led him to adopt the profession. When he yielded, it was with no expectation or ambition beyond a respectable existence. Mournfully he abandoned "those light hopes of eminence which ambition inspired and vanity fostered." One must live; and decently, if possible; that was the most to which he aspired.

"Providence will do well for us yet [he stoutly insists, writing to Zeke.] We shall live and live comfortably."

But the disgust of his soul at thought of a future devoted to a profession which he neither liked nor respected, breaks out in another letter with its bitter conclusion:

"Oh, blindness! stupidity! infatuation! nonsense! folly! and

"D. WEBSTER."

Somewhere, somehow, through that mysterious facility in raising the wind which never wholly failed the clan, money was found to get him to Boston. There he was presented to the Hon. Christopher Gore by a convivial young gentleman named Bradley, encountered at a party, who apparently had not the advantage of the learned lawyer's acquaintance but did not permit that to deter him from doing a good turn to a visiting stranger. Gore, "that deep and various scholar," was an imposing personage with the manners and magnificence of an earlier age. He had been a Commissioner to England, was reputed to take ten thousand dollars a year in fees, and drove to business in a six-horse coach vivid with scarlet running gear, trappings, and the livery of the servants.

After some unpromising preliminaries, due to natural embarrassment on the part of the enterprising Bradley, the lawyer bade the applicant hang up his hat and promptly forgot him. A week or so later he was surprised to see a youthful stranger making him-

self at home in the office and asked him who he was. This point being cleared up, he gave him some errands to do and otherwise let him alone.

An office course in law was then predicated upon the method of teaching a boy to swim by throwing him into the water. Take it or leave it, there was the Hon. Christopher's law library. Presumably Daniel took it. But he derived more satisfaction and perhaps more training from attending the courts and analyzing the foremost pleaders, Dexter, Parsons, Granger, not so much for legal technic as for method of presentation. Oratory, not law, or rather the oratory of the law, was what chiefly interested him.

Entrée to society was open to him. What society, he does not specify, but it must have been superior in tone, for he bought himself a seven-dollar beaver hat, and thread gloves for seventy-five cents. He also paid a dollar sixty cents for "The Pursuit of Literature." The old love was dying hard. That physical splendor which was to distinguish him beyond all other men of his generation was beginning to manifest itself, though it was of slow development. Fine ladies of Boston—we have it on his own authority—discussed over their teacups whether Mr. W. is a plain man or no. He votes no, and with a gay impudence quite beyond petty vanity offers to prove, as an exercise in logic that "I am the handsomest man in New England." Meantime he is "playing backgammon with the girls to keep

off the glooms" and, looking up from a game one day, sees a sight outside the window which moves him to a fine moral indignation—the spectacle of that much fêted *rastaquouére*, Jerome Bonaparte, riding past: "This lordly grasshopper, this puppet in Prince's robes, dashing through the American cities, luxuriously rioting on the property of Dutch mechanics or Swiss peasants." Webster had small love for the French.

Relief from pecuniary embarrassments presented itself in a letter from home: Come back and be clerk of the Merrimack County Court, a place worth from $1,500 to $2,000 a year. Such was the temptation held out. This was more than a competence; it was riches. The busiest and most successful lawyer in New Hampshire made little if any more. It would not only establish young Daniel for life, but would also pull the depleted family fortunes out of the mire. "I was the recipient of a great honor," is Webster's autobiographic version of the matter. This is to give too little credit to the hard work of his father, who for two years had employed his influence as lay member of the court, scheming, importuning, and wire-pulling to land the job. Judge of old Ebenezer's dismay when the impecunious Daniel declined the offer.

"You'll come to naught," barked the incensed side-judge, which may stand conspicuous in the roster of prophecies without honor in their own fulfillment.

Christopher Gore's judgment was better. He had taken the measure of his apprentice. Young Webster's business in life, so he told him, was to "make opinions for other men to record, not to be the clerk to record the opinions of courts." Let him go back to his native state, by all means, but as a practitioner not a recorder of the law. By way of parting blessing he gave his protégé two bits of advice, a motto of expediency and a counsel of principle:

"Make yourself useful to your friends and a little formidable to your enemies, and you have nothing to fear."

"Whatever bread you eat, let it be the bread of independence."

Daniel followed the one and forgot the other.

When he presented himself for admission to the bar, Gore gave him a handsome introduction. A few years later he remarks that he wouldn't trust Gore with sixpence. That was when politics had become the mold of his opinions.

CHAPTER IV

THE LEGAL MECHANIC

YOU must know that I have opened a shop in this village for the sale of justice writs. Other mechanics do pretty well here, and I am determined to try my luck."

Such was the young practitioner's disparaging view of a reluctantly adopted profession. "This village" was Boscawen, a compact settlement on the Merrimack River, a few miles below the parental place of entertainment for man and beast. Fees were far from munificent: three dollars for a court appearance; as low as sixpence for minor services. What was worse, they proved infrequent. Whence Daniel derived his lordly estimate of five hundred dollars as a fair expectation of his first-year earnings is a mystery. He hardly paid his office rent.

"I am hungry twice where I am lovesick once," he pathetically wrote to a friend in those lean days. And again, "Money is scarce as love."

Yet his "heart ever overflows with love for the sex." Letters to his classmates teem with interested inquiries as to the quality of the "ribs" in the localities to which they had scattered. Are they pretty? So-

ciable? Amiable? Of the Boscawen variety he has small opinion. His college romance is unforgotten. Wistfully he seeks news of her to whom, with the coy elisions of the day, he refers as "M—y W—d."

No monetary help may be expected from home. Brother Zeke seems to be the financial mainstay now for the family. He is perhaps earning, and certainly borrowing, a bit here and there. Disappointed of a loan of $50 from a Mr. Perkins, he picks up $30 somewhere else and sends it on to Salisbury, where the tavern meantime has been sold but the farm retained. Daniel, who had helped him in his time of need, would now be glad of a lift, in return, "if you can find any one who is fool enough to lend you the money till June," he writes with truly brotherly frankness.

At the low ebb of his resources fortune hit him a foul blow. By dint of such sore frugalities as may be imagined, Daniel had raised $85 which he had despatched to Boston to buy necessary law books, only to have the whole sum stolen by a rascally messenger. He records the mischance in a vein of good-humored stoicism. He was a game loser always. It is some palliation to know that the bookseller trusted him for the order.

To fill the weary hours of waiting for clients, the young man wrote reams of letters; some in the impeccable meter of the doggerel which came so easy to him; mostly in prose, light, lively, or grave. This

early correspondence, of which so much has happily been preserved that the reader suspects a prophetic vision of future interest on the part of the recipients, outlines an extraordinary and glowing personality. They are just such letters as a healthy, hearty, hungry, sensitive-minded youth with a touch of unmistakable genius might be expected to write in any age about himself, his ambitions and needs, his reading, girls, sports, politics, and the people whom he encountered. They are cheerful, warm-hearted, valorous, impatient, vivid in expression, irradiated with charm, not infrequently acute and subtle in thought, catholic in interest, alternately wistful and boastful, and hot with a boisterous zest for life and its fair promises. In his later communications these qualities are too often smothered by a sense of what was expected of his greatness, though sometimes there is a happy bubbling-up of the old fun and eagerness. The youthful attorney of 1805 would have been a person richly worth knowing.

His restless pen was not restricted to letter-writing. Authorship still tempted, and though he finds it "so laborious," nevertheless he branches out. Icarus is now a figment of the past. Journalistic wings of wax will not gain the heights to which he aspires. No less a goal than the *Monthly Anthology*, organ of the Boston intelligentsia, will satisfy him. He was successful with an early attempt, and the gloom of that stodgy

publication was intensified by some painfully conscientious and prolix reviews from his pen. Gaining confidence, he presently lightened the pages with a graceful article on "The French Language." There are sparkling touches in it which seem impudent as fireflies in a graveyard, amidst the solemn murk of the other articles:

"The French throw away compliment as if it were of no value; Johnson confers praise, not as if praise were worthless but as if he were generous." And again, "I would make love in Italian, converse with wits and connoisseurs in French, say my prayers in Spanish, and talk to my dog in some of the dialects of the Baltic; but my funeral elegy should have been written in English."

Considering that Webster, never much of a linguist, knew at this time little if anything of any of the languages cited except the last, this is the more dashing as a literary adventure. Followed by other efforts, it secured him a membership in the Anthology Society, no mean honor for so young a man, and no inconsiderable fellowship with such scholarly names as Ticknor, Everett, Tuckerman, President Willard of Harvard, and his own cousin, Noah, of dictionary fame. The lexicophile motif, by the way, must have run in the family blood: at his death Daniel had the most nearly complete set of dictionaries in America.

Recognition was pleasant, but cash was essential.

It was all very well for Chancellor Kent, defining the politely simple requirements of the time to say, "A gentleman needs only a clean shirt and a shilling a day." Kent had never known the lack of either. The struggling young attorney had been without both, and was heartily tired of it. The monotony of village existence, where "a little money might be made but no pleasure of a social order enjoyed," palled upon him. His ambitions and appetites yearned for richer fleshpots than Boscawen could provide. Restiveness tugged at his heels. There was nothing to bind him to that locality. His father had died, insolvent. Zeke was away. His interest in the rest of the family was dutiful rather than affectionate. Packing his Lares and Penates, personal and legal, he moved upon a larger world.

Portsmouth was the most aristocratic city in New England. It had grown rich through the shipping trade, a romantic, risky and highly profitable commerce which made many a skipper a hero or a martyr according to his luck, and many an owner a rich man. Webster was fortunate in having for a friend the Reverend Buckminster, pastor of a fashionable church, whose son had been his instructor at Exeter. There were two Buckminster girls, lively and pretty, who took an interest in the good-looking young stranger, sisterly rather than sentimental. He used to sit in their parlor window improvising character sketches of

the pedestrians, assigning to each some extravagant rôle in life and acting it out with excruciating mimicry.

It was for the sprightly Eliza that he wrote his polite "Autobiography," after he had become great and she had become Mrs. Lee. The work exhibits aristocratical tendencies, and exhales faint, parlorish fragrances of lavender, rose leaves, and elegant propriety. Historically it is negligible. The reader somehow is made to feel that the writer lacks familiarity with his subject.

How full life was in those days of his early expansion! He joined the church. He frequented the library and was shocked by the immoralities of Thomas Moore's new love-poems. There were lectures by touring college professors for the enlargement of the mind, discourses on far lands by returned missionaries; and the fashionable and expensive academy of Mr. Richards where for ten dollars per quarter one could be instructed in dancing, "a salubrious as well as a sentimental branch of gymnastics." If he essayed this it did not "take"; he never became a dancing man. Singing class was cheaper, but he would hardly have been welcomed there, as he was tone-deaf and confined his vocal endeavor to a rich, bellowing monotone in the deep bass register. Theatrical offerings were few but tempting. Shakespeare was occasionally given, and a visiting troupe from Boston might pre-

sent that humorous musical conceit "Inkle and Yarico" or the delicious comedy "Cheap Living." Better within the scope of his purse was the Live Leopard (12½ cents a view) at Col. Gains's woodhouse in Mason Street, and the Lofty Ostrich (also 12½ cents and alive) at Redding's Ladd Street Hairdressing Establishment. Always there were the docks, rich in the glamour and mystery of strange smelling cargoes and the ships with their winged appeal to young adventurousness. The inland-bred farm boy became profoundly romantic about the sea, and never got over it.

Legal business came in to him from the countryside. It took him a little time to establish himself in the confidence of exclusive Portsmouth. Consequently he was much on the road.

His first appearance before the Superior Court was in 1807. Being at the time only an attorney and not a counselor, he was prohibited from addressing the jury. He could only examine witnesses and state his case. This latter he did in memorable style. "His voice," testifies a courtroom spectator, "soon increased in power and volume till it filled the whole house . . . his whole countenance was radiant with emotion." This is the more notable in that the cause at issue was trespass by a horse.

So favorable an impression did he make that, when admitted to full practice, he was assigned to defend a

particularly brutal murderer. His plea in this desperate cause was a great impetus to his career. It was less helpful to his client, who was hanged.

On these court tours he was often accompanied by and opposed to Jeremiah Mason, who became his guiding light in the law and to whom he often appealed for the technical lore which he was too impatient of routine to dig out for himself.

Mason was a picturesque figure, a great, black, gaunt, gangling hop-pole of a man, who towered a whole eight inches over the robust Webster. His was the best legal mind in New Hampshire, and, Webster thinks, the equal of any at the American bar. His manner was dry, direct, quiet and personal, the antithesis of that of his young friend and rival. It was about an even break between them in effectiveness before a jury, though Webster was overwhelmingly the favorite of the crowds, and Mason carried more weight with the judges. Riding circuit with the rising orator was like "traveling with a caravan," humorously complains Mason. What he thought of his confrere's legal attainments is not of record: but he may have believed him more fitted for a gaudier profession. "There was never such an actor lost to the stage," he opines.

Sometimes his legal companion was Zeke, who had earned his way through school-teaching into the law. From the pen of N. P. Rogers, a New Hampshire

journalist, afterward editor of the perfervid Abolitionist *Herald of Freedom*, we owe a sketch of the Webster brothers' early associated practice. Rogers's lack of grammar was a literary trick. He was a more spirited reporter than his contemporary, "J. R. L." [Lowell] and a better fist at character than that other casual biographer, Nathaniel Hawthorne. To "Mr. Tribune" (of New York) he contributes this contemporary view:

> "There's a town a little south of me, about thirty-five miles off, in plain sight, where they've held courts for the county. It's the county of Grafton. They've held courts there these seventy years. Webster used to come to court there when he was a young lawyer. They say he went to his first court there. I don't know how that is, but he went there when he was almost a boy. I could see him plainly from here. He was singular in his look. Him and his brother 'Zeke' used to come to court together after a year or two. Daniel came first, though 'Zeke' was the eldest. I can see them now, driving into that little village in their bellows-top chaise—top thrown back—driving like Jehu, the chaise bending under them like a close-top in a high wind. I had heard tell of Diomede and Ulysses—a couple of old Greeks that used to ride in some

such looking cars as they did, though I believe the Greeks don't ride together. But Daniel and Zeke Webster made me think of them two Greeks. Daniel used to drive very fast. They'd come in as if they'd started long before day; and it was a sight in a small place, to see them two ride together. I could have told either of them thirty miles among a thousand men.

"The court house was a little one-story building that stood on a hill. Daniel made his first speech, they tell me, in that house, and tried his first case there. It was a small case and the only one he had. He wanted to get it put by. The lawyer on the other side was opposed to it, and Daniel got up and made a speech to the court that made the little old house ring again. They all said, lawyers and judges and people, that they never heard such a speech, or anything like it. They said he talked like a different creature from any of the rest of them, great or small, and there were men there that were not small. There was a man tried for his life in that court, or one soon after, and the judges chose Webster to plead for him; and from what I can learn, he never has spoken better since than he did there when he first began.

"He was a black raven-haired fellow, with an eye as black as death, and as heavy as a lion's—

and no lion in Africa ever had a voice like him; and his look was like a lion's—that same heavy look, not sleepy, but as if he didn't care about anything that was going on about him or anything else. He didn't look as if he was thinking about anything; but as if he would think like a hurricane if he once got waked up to it. They say the lion looks so when he is quiet. It wasn't an empty look, this of Webster's, but one that didn't seem to see anything going on worth his while.

"Zekiel didn't used to speak in the courts for a great many years. The talk was that he couldn't say anything. They said he was a better judge of law than Daniel, but couldn't speak. He did not need to speak much for he generally put his cases into such a shape that he got them without coming to trial. Nobody ever knew how or why, but Zeke Webster's cases hardly ever came to trial. After some years he got to helping try other lawyer's cases and then he spoke and as well as a man could speak, more sensible they say than Daniel himself. It was not till after Daniel left the state, and some thought he didn't speak before because Daniel was present.

"There was a lawyer by the name of Parker Noyes that used to go to court the same time with

the Websters, a better lawyer it was said than either of them, but he hadn't Daniel's power of talk, a nicely read lawyer and a fatal pleader. Webster used to dread to meet him, he said. He knew the books and the cases and was an authority about the court house. Webster would sometimes be engaged to argue a case just as it was coming to trial. That would set him to thinking. It wouldn't wrinkle his forehead but made him restless. He would shift his feet about, and run his hands up over his forehead, through his Indian-black hair, and lift his upper lip and show his teeth, which were as white as a hound's. He would get up and go across the bar and sit down by Parker Noyes, and ask him where such a law was decided, and the names of the cases—not what the law was, but where it was in the books. What it was he decided for himself. Noyes would tell him where it was and then he would go back to his seat, and when the case would come up for trial, he would up and pour out the law and cite his authorities, as if he had spent months in poring upon it—his own mind arriving at the decisions of the sages of the law without having seen the books, and on the spur of the moment, but for the sake of the judge he would ask Parker Noyes to tell him where the authorities had written it down."

Now we confront again the recurrent Websterian mystery of money. Dan must have been in receipt of a comfortable income. What became of it?

"Money I have none," he writes to Zeke in the spring of 1808. "I shall certainly be hanged before three weeks, if I can not get some. What is to be done?" This dreary prognostication was not fulfilled, for the three weeks are more than up when he writes again: "I have already got to the second item in my will, expecting to be hanged, but not quite as soon. Sue everybody: that's the word."

Within a few weeks of this informal declaration of bankruptcy, a comfortable house "with acqueduct" in Vaughn Street came up for sale at auction and Webster, still unhanged, bought it. Whence came the five or six thousand dollars to pay the bill? Another mystery. In his most remunerative year at Portsmouth he never made more than two thousand dollars. How he furnished his house is indicated by an incident preserved in local tradition.

A Portsmouth merchant had sold him carpets on credit. Finding the credit extended beyond conscience, and unable to extract anything but promissory language from the householder, he commissioned a budding lawyer to collect the bill. Young Mr. Emery was received with urbanity and at once engaged in conversation. Was he interested in politics? He was, and of the Federalist creed. Pacing the unpaid-for

carpet, Mr. Webster launched into a discourse upon the character and statesmanship of George Washington. The visitor was enchanted. Never before had he heard such eloquence except upon the public hustings. To have it privately bestowed upon himself dazzled him. One hour succeeded to another and at the end the young man withdrew, too full of noble phraseology to leave any space for consideration of carpets. The merchant, however, not having been a beneficiary of the oratory, was dissatisfied. Upon his insistence, the remorseful young lawyer returned, only to be eloquently beguiled once more from the purpose of his errand. He then paid the debt out of his own pocket. Here we see in embryo Webster's early developed power to charm and divert to his own purposes the individual, as he afterward charmed and manipulated audiences and factions; also his blithe yet determined financial methods, *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.*

The house, afterward burned with total loss to its owner, was purchased to shelter a wife. Slipping quietly away to Salisbury one June week-end, the attractive bachelor returned, a married man. "Grace" (the real name was Gratia) Fletcher, daughter of a New Hampshire clergyman, was a year older than her husband. In her girlhood she was robust, buoyant, gay, an out-door creature, vivid with youth. As a wife she blurs into the shadow of her tremendous hus-

band. She becomes a little elevated in tone and correspondingly dim in outline. Being married to Daniel Webster must have been a sort of "going into the silences." With her grand consort she was much in love; his feeling for her seems to have been affectionate rather than romantic. Beyond the fact that she was gentle, thoughtful, conscientious, a docile wife, a contented home-body and a good mother to their children, little appears. Socially she was unimportant. She became frail in health. Webster cared for her tenderly in her illness and sincerely mourned her when she died, after twenty years of marriage. She adds little to the record of his life.

No woman deeply influenced Daniel Webster.

CHAPTER V

A SUPPRESSED DEBUT

WHATEVER his earlier hesitancies, Webster was now politically committed. In Portsmouth the Federalists represented the wealth, the vested interests, and the social prestige of the town. They had everything essential to complete control except the votes. He cast his lot with this superior minority.

It was a traditional as well as an advantageous connection for the young lawyer. He had been brought up in that faith. Before his trial of new fortunes he had made a few partisan speeches, and his "Appeal to Old Whigs" on behalf of that Governor Gilman from whom the elder Webster had "hired" the money to send the younger through college, was well thought of by the leaders. He now joined the local Washington Benevolent Society, where his fiery denunciations of the Embargo became a popular weekly feature.

Ship-owning, which is to say Federalist, New England had taken hard the measure of the Jefferson administration, holding all American bottoms in port. The Massachusetts Legislature threatened disunion. Governor Trumbull of Connecticut denounced Con-

gress as having violated the Constitution. The Rhode Island militia mutinied when called upon to aid enforcement. Facing a civil war, Jefferson had withdrawn the restrictions. Facing a foreign war, or perhaps two, Madison was considering a resumption of them, and Josiah Quincy was expressing the sentiments of his section, when he declaimed that "The jaws of the British lion and the French tiger are places of repose, of joy and delight when compared with the grasp and fang of this hyena Embargo."

Portsmouth felt very much that way about it, and with reason. She had gone through the experience of staring out upon a harbor full of shipping which collected no increment except barnacles, while idle labor watched the grass grow on the wharves and owners went bankrupt. She wanted no more of that. Still less did she wish war, the probable alternative. Frenchmen might hold up and ransack our vessels on the high seas, British frigates patrol our ports and kidnap our seamen into slavery; Portsmouth's Federalists were for peace and profit. It was a practical, business community.

On an issue of anti-Embargo, anti-War, Daniel Webster first presented himself as a candidate for office, the Federalists having nominated him for town representative in the Legislature. He fought a good fight, though not quite good enough. In a strongly Republican community he led his ticket and tied his

opponent for the last choice. "There being no choice for a fifth representative, the poll was again opened." Result, Upham, 474; Webster, 379. Thus the Portsmouth newspaper records the initial defeat of one who was never again to be defeated in an election.

Nowhere else is it recorded, so far as I have been able to ascertain. Webster's early biographers ignore it with inexplicable unanimity. His own "Autobiography" omits it, although the lady for whom that polite record was composed, must, as a contemporary resident, have been cognizant of the facts. One gropes in vain for an explanation of the suppression. Hurt vanity? There was nothing to be ashamed of in so gallant an effort against odds. A slip of memory? A politician is as little likely to forget his first campaign as a woman her first baby. Minor though the circumstance is, it has special interest in that it is probably without parallel in the political annals of the great.

To the one hundred per cent militarist, our young statesman's early record will hardly commend itself; nor, indeed, to the normally patriotic prejudice. The later protagonist of a militant nationalism gave an exhibition, in the troubled times of 1812, of what verges uncomfortably upon sedition. War having been declared, Portsmouth promptly went pacifist and obstructionist. Webster, chosen to deliver the Independence Day oration, stirred the sore hearts of his towns-

men with an eloquent denunciation of the Government's course:

> "To call upon us now to forsake the seas, to forget the virtues of the magnet, to lose even the observance and guidance of the stars, is to summon us to repeal as well the Constitution of civilized man and the laws of nature, as the Constitution of the country."

This is typical Webster rhetoric, of a kind which, in a lesser man, might seem bombast. There is little enough in the Constitution of the United States about stars, and less about magnets, and it is difficult to see wherein a maritime embargo could repeal the laws of nature except for a fish. But the form of the appeal was moving.

When the business interests of the place, fretting cruelly under the stricture of the Embargo, decided upon a formal protest and called the Rockingham County meeting, to the fervent young upholder of local interests was assigned the composition of a memorial to the President of the United States. This document expressed a communal spirit frankly alarmist, covertly defeatist and secessionist. It went as far in hint and threat as its framers dared to go, which was pretty far.

This was neither as impolitic nor as unsafe as it would now seem. Free speech was actually maintained

through the War of 1812; its echoes plagued various statesmen afterward, Webster among them. When the declaration of war was published, the flags in Portsmouth Harbor and other ports were half-masted. Secession had been preached from many New England pulpits. Newspapers had advocated it editorially: the *Centinel*, the *Repertory*, the *Boston Gazette*. In that period of frank discussion, and of loose national ties, secession was scarcely treason. Rather it was a political habit of mind, hardly more reprehensible than the threat of a bolt from a political convention. If you belonged to the opposition and disapproved of the administration's methods, you threatened to walk out and maybe join up with another party or nation. This did not mean that you really would walk out; it meant that you hoped to scare the dominant party into abandonment or modification of its policies. The New England Federalists thought to frighten the administration out of war in which they could see neither profit nor glory; a view which had much to commend it to cautious business sense.

They had no luck. In so far as any effect was produced upon the sturdy Madison by the Rockingham manifesto and similar bogies—communication received; contents duly noted and filed. The war proceeded.

Practical recognition of his services followed shortly for Webster. He was nominated for Congress

and this time he won. It was an anti-War victory.

While our man is still outside the actual arena of national politics, we may turn to consider him in his private capacity. It is time to bid good-by to the Daniel Webster that we have known; the spontaneous, eager-hearted young idealist with his contented expectancy of plain living and high thinking.

Some dim magic is in play here. We do not hear the metamorphosing "Presto!" nor identify the exact moment of the change. But it is none the less obvious. The care-free country lawyer, writing for the *Anthology*, heedless about money, easy in his affections as in his debts, neither expecting nor wishing for anything more than a comfortable and honorable livelihood, expending his superabundant mental energy in jingles to his friends and orations to his neighbors, vanishes. In his place appears a go-getter. Money becomes the master-motive of his life.

Looking back, from the age of sixty-seven, at the young man that was Webster, the old man that is Webster draws this pen-picture of his past self:

> "It will be said, or may be said hereafter, Mr. Webster was a laborious man in his profession and other pursuits; he never tasted of the bread of idleness; his profession yielded him, at some times, large amounts of income; but he seems never to have aimed at accumulation, and per-

haps was not justly sensible of the importance and duty of preservation. Riches were never before his eyes as a leading object of regard. When young and poor, he was more earnest in struggling for eminence than in efforts for making money; and, in after life, reputation, public regard, and usefulness in high pursuits mainly engrossed his attention. He always said, also, that he was never destined to be rich; that no such star presided over his birth; that he never obtained anything by any attempts or efforts out of the line of his profession."

This is an appreciative characterization of a noble character, remote from the vulgarian struggles of the mob. Doubtless, the writer thoroughly believed it in 1849 when it was penned. He would naturally view his formative years in the splendid colors of a prismatic memory. But in 1813 his ambition was more practical. To a wealthy friend, he writes: "You must contrive some way for me to be rich as soon as there is peace," and to show how much in earnest he is, underscores the words. Pending this enrichment, he negotiated a loan. (This same friend afterward presented him with a yacht, surely a strange method of helping any one to get rich!)

Before this, Daniel had been contriving curious professional ways for himself of realizing his ardent de-

sire. "I have sued everybody I could," he wrote to Brother Zeke, in semi-jocular mood. But it was in serious earnest that he tried to drum up business by methods which come within his own earlier definition of "mischief-making and money-catching." From the *New Hampshire Gazette* he clipped virulent editorial matter and forwarded it to the person libeled, urging him to sue. When this attempt failed, he repeated the incitement and got his retainer. First or last we must reconcile ourselves to questionable professional conduct on the part of the greatest court lawyer of his day, which can be excused only on the ground that he felt himself to be beyond technical restrictions. Some indirect explanation may be found in his innate dislike for the law, fundamentally a resentment against the tedious labor of preparation from which his brilliant and restless mind instinctively shrank. Respect for professional ethics he had none, and little enough for the courts.

"The region of blunders," he calls them, and regards the Judges of Common Pleas, before whom he began his practice as "too contemptible to be noticed—ignorant, indolent, vain. I trust [treat?] them as they deserve; that is, as if they had no authority and deserved no respect."

Arrogant enough, for a young itinerant. The beginnings of success had turned him a little bumptious. "You would suppose him a great merchant living in a

maritime city," complains one critic. Another who perhaps had suffered from one of the orator's ponderous excoriations considers him "malignant as Robespierre and not less tyrannical." Even a friendly commentator found him brusque and lofty. But this perverse spirit was only a passing phase. With growth to greatness and its self-confidence, he became, in his public life, one of the most fair, restrained, and even magnanimous of opponents in an arena where Clay God-damned on the floor of Congress and the well-bred Sumner used the common or undomestic skunk as a convenient simile for his antagonist in debate.

When elected to Congress Webster was making two thousand dollars a year, a large income for the day and place, but not enough for him. A son had been born. The Vaughn Street house, destroyed in the big fire, was a total loss. With characteristic fortitude the owner merely thanked God that no lives were sacrificed.

Evidently he was neither as hard-working nor as methodical in his business conduct as he might have been. Industry and method are not characteristic of the oratorical temperament. Some Boston clients with trade in Portsmouth had put their affairs in his hands, and with little satisfaction. Letters indicate delays, neglect, and accountings unrendered. He was apologetic. In one reply he avows the "greatest pain and mortification" over his dereliction. With a view, pre-

sumably, to better office management, he took in a partner, of whom only the name and derivation survive. Timothy Farrar of New Ipswich appears on the record briefly and vanishes therefrom into the shades.

Going to Congress was no way to get rich, either before or after "there is a peace." Six dollars a day, the pay of a Representative, was about what he could make at home, it is true, but expenses at the National Capital were heavy. Pending the time when the opulent Mr. March should contrive some way of enrichment, the new Congressman himself would keep an eye out for any chances that might be flying.

> "I never heard what particular substance Archimedes wished his desired fulcrum to be, resting on which he was going to move the world . . . but if his design had been to move everything in it, he would have wished it cash; cash of all things of a perishable nature is worth the most . . . it deserves the most toil. It ever did, does, and ever will constitute the real, unavoidable aristocracy that exists and must exist in society."

This evidence of a focusing vision upon the world was written at the time when our young idealist was beginning to take on realism. It is the spirit in which he now marches upon Washington.

CHAPTER VI

A DÁNIEL COME TO ORATE

FAME had been his advance courier at the National Capital. The House awaited him with an interest seldom accorded to a newcomer. It was not disappointed. At his first appearance he had passed through the lobby pensive, remote, bowing absently as he passed this group or that, looking neither to right nor left, an impressive presentation of a statesman, lost in profundity of thought. Several Representatives were gathered in a corner, after their morning drink: Cheves, Grundy, the austere Calhoun, Lowndes, Ingersoll, Ingham.

"Thinks no small potatoes of himself," commented one.

"A most respectable orator, I am apprised."

"What style does he affect?"

"The rotund and classic. A New England Cicero."

"New England can find employment for a Cicero." A superior and tolerant smile was evoked by this. The South was comfortably conscious of its predominance in brains, power, and prestige.

"A handsome man, you will concede."

"And pranked out for the fair. What a vest!"

"Our dandiprat politicos must look to their laurels."

"Warn the ladies and tell Henry Clay a rival is in the field."

"They say that his self-importance and egotism are disgusting."

"You have been reading our friend Ike Hill's *Patriot*."

"I am informed that his power over an audience is positively magnetic," said Ingersoll.

"When shall we have opportunity of hearing this New Hampshire Demosthenes?" inquired Calhoun.

"Soon, doubtless. Mr. Speaker Clay is said to regard him favorably."

"That is to say, our Harry conceives that he can use him."

"If he possesses forensic capacity, he will make his way," prophesied Ingham.

"He looks the part to a marvel," said Grundy.

Oratory, in a day when speech was still more potent than print, was the surest path to political, professional and personal eminence. Its place in the social scheme was multiform and unique. It was the most popular form of literature in a period when of the making of many books there was, indeed, almost an end. Furthermore, it was the most popular form of entertainment, having practically supplanted the weak and sterile theater.

Daniel Webster fully justified Grundy's favorable opinion. If not the most attractive personality in public life—Henry Clay was that—he was the handsomest. He was still slender; the rounded barrel of his orator's chest had not yet taken on its later resemblance to that of an operatic basso's. But from the neck up he was astoundingly robust. There was the great, crag-like bulge of the brow, with the heavy, black forest of hair above it, and the deep, brilliant yet glooming eyes below. The mouth and nose were sharp-cut and refined, the chin a good solid base. In type he was not the English squire to whom he has so often and so erroneously been compared, but the black Celt, deriving his beauty and his dark distinction from a Welsh grandmother. Welsh, also, was that sonorous and thrilling voice, which was his chief professional asset.

A waspish contemporary observed that in his first term he could not resist thrusting his right hand into his coat front when conscious of the notice of the bystanders.

Clay took up the New Hampshire man at once. The Mill Boy of the Slashes had been made Speaker of the House while still a newcomer, and was, at one bound, a forefront figure in Washington. He was five years Webster's senior; vivid, adventurous, incomparably popular, adroit, a master of that system of political averaging which is termed compromise,

and the most resourceful of manipulators and conciliators.

A relationship which was assumed by their contemporaries to be friendship, quickly developed between the brilliant Kentuckian and the massive-minded New Englander. It was never quite that. Loyalty, an essential element, was lacking. Each played fast and loose with the other. As nearly as Webster could be at ease with any one, however, he was at ease with Clay. After the change noted in the previous chapter, he took on a rigidity of spirit; he was stilted, formal, closed-in upon himself. He had admirers, adherents, worshipers, followers, whose attitude was that of subjects to royalty, but with the exception of his feeling for Zeke, his affections were inhibited. There was no warmth in the man. This may explain why he stopped short of complete leadership.

It may explain also why he was attracted to the radiant vitality of Clay. They drank together, gambled together, and even joked together, the while they were secretly scheming to undermine each other in the influence of their backers. Clay was the more powerful personality, and therefore played the dominant part in their long and sometimes interrupted duet, though Webster overweighed him in intellectual capacity.

At first they were opponents on the prime question

of the day. The War of 1812 was a languid and inglorious affair, reluctantly undertaken by both nations, prosecuted with little zeal and less credit on either side, and concluded without determining any of the issues on which it was fought. Nevertheless, for the United States the recourse to arms was inevitable. British stupidity and arrogance, overriding the protests of many leading English statesmen, had forced it. New England's opposition was based upon a preference for trade over national self-respect. Webster then, as always, represented New England first. Clay was a "war-hawk" and his ablest supporter was Calhoun. They were committed to upholding Madison's war policies to the finish.

Whether in pre-recognition of his abilities, or from another motive, Clay appointed Webster to the highly important Committee on Foreign Relations. Here was work which enlisted his liveliest interest. That indolence which had affected his legal career was abandoned. He dug into the committee reports and brought up material which he considered valuable in what was to be his principal effort of the session, the attempt to hamper the conduct of the war.

A favorite Federalist device to embarrass the administration in its campaign, was to insist that the French offenses against us were as flagrant as the British, which was not far from true. If we could be em-

broiled with Napoleon—and we were perilously near it—the whole foolish and wasteful project of the war (as the Federalists saw it) would perhaps be dropped. Pursuant to this policy, Representative Webster called for information on the French decrees in a speech which so impressed John Marshall that the future Chief Justice then and there prophesied for the young New Hampshireman a leading if not the foremost place in American statesmanship.

More money was needed for the army; a war-tariff was put forward. Webster opposed it, partly to obstruct the war, partly because he was then as ardent for free trade as he afterward became fervent for high protection. Madison called for a draft of the States militia. It was a measure essential to the carrying on of the war. Webster recognized this. "Voluntary enlistments will not answer," he wrote to Brother Zeke. Prevent the draft, he and his associate Federalists figured, and the nation must abandon the campaign. Therefore he boldly denounced the draft. Congress had no power to call out the States militia. Such a project "threatened the dissolution of government." If it were put into force it would be, he held, "the solemn duty of the States' government to protect their authority over their own militia and to interfere between their citizens and arbitrary power." As a declaration of States' rights, that seems fairly comprehensive. "And," he added, "I shall exhort them to

exercise their unquestionable right of providing for the securing of their own liberties."

Biographers of Webster are curiously cautious in interpreting this phase of his political development. Transplanted to 1917, that utterance would be labeled treason. It was, in fact, constructive rebellion.

By one of those curious twists which distort politics, Webster was haunted throughout his career by the ghost of the later Hartford Convention. This was supposed to have looked to secession and re-union with England. No proof is adducible that it did or that it went further than the Rockingham Memorial. Furthermore, Webster did not attend it, and probably had no part nor influence whatsoever in its proceedings. Yet all his life he was kept busy refuting the charge of complicity in Hartford, whereas his major rôle at Rockingham and the sequelæ were generally ignored. Calhoun did call him to account, after the war was over, for obstructing the nation's measures. He denied it.

"Look up the Journals," he boldly challenged his accuser.

The retort seems to have bluffed Calhoun completely. There was plenty of material to his hand in the Journals of Congress. He made no use of it. This was one of Webster's sources of strength. When hard put to it, he either ignored or denied, and usually with success.

In recognition of his services to the party, he was appointed, after his first term, on the special House organization of the Federalists, which was perhaps the original "steering committee." He was already important.

Washington was no haven of delight for a new arrival. The dream-city of the inspired and prophetic L'Enfant was far from fulfillment of his vision. It sprawled loosely across the dreary expanses of mud and water which the malarious owners had gratefully ceded to the Government on easy terms when the capital was moved from fashionable Philadelphia. The main avenues were a succession of pitch-holes, in which the grazing cattle occasionally bogged down. Houses were scattered, one or two to the block. Street lights and drainage did not exist.

Hotels were few and bad; boarding-houses many and worse. Expenses were high. Night-faring on foot was unsafe, and the charges of the banditti who controlled the hacking trade were too exorbitant for any but the prosperous. Prudent men went armed. Saloons abounded. So did gaming houses and resorts of a still more flagrant character. The moral and social atmosphere was that of a frontier town impinged upon by an alien official incursion. If one may judge from the letters of the period, practically everybody suffered from rheumatism, asthma, chills and fever, gripes of the bowels, and colds, from which, as

a contemporary visitor succinctly observes, "those who do not die, recover."

Webster called the city "The Great Dismal," and hoped, after his first experience of it, that he would never have to come back. When Mrs. Webster joined him, she liked it as little as he did.

Out in the higher and healthier region of George Town, a little group of Federalists had gathered at Crawford's Hotel. Webster's staunch friend and legal opponent, Jeremiah Mason, was there, a notable figure with his six feet seven inches of lankness, his stormy eyes, and his affluent profanity. "By thy height and thy language I judge thee to be J. Mason, friend," said a Quaker who had collided with him, coming around a corner. Webster thought him at least the professional equal of John Marshall, who lived in the same hostelry. There was also Pickering, from whom the young Daniel had solicited business by forwarding editorial insults from Ike Hill's paper; and the lordly Christopher Gore, with his red-trimmed coach and six. The new Congressman found a congenial atmosphere there. True, it was a long way from the Capitol, but the Honorable Gore was obliging with a lift, if the weather was not too bad and the streets too swampy for the journey. When they were, it did not matter. Neither house expected a quorum on a stormy day.

Political affiliations determined social life to a

greater extent than afterward. The Southern element dominated, and was fully conscious of its superiority. Webster resented this. He felt himself at least the equal of these old-time aristocrats who were supporting Madison in his prosecution of a nefarious and ruinous war. When he went to the President's House to meet the incumbent, it was with a predetermination to find him lacking, and sure enough he liked Mr. Madison's looks as little as his politics. As for the administration party in the House, he contemptuously terms them "such a low set." But this misprisal of the "war-howlers" and "war-hawks" was hardly genuine. In his heart he knew that men such as Clay, Calhoun, Forsyth and Cheves, whatever else they might be, were not a "low set." Nevertheless he would not let himself be overawed or overborne by them; he would be as stiff as the stiffest, as haughty to them as they were to himself or others. His manners at this time seem to have been touchy and unpleasant. They earned him the reputation of an upstart. William Pinkney, leader of the American bar, snubbed him more than once, and Webster, long after, found a childish satisfaction in telling a cock-and-bull story of bluffing the great lawyer into a humble and public apology.

Meantime the war had been going ill enough for America to gratify the most disaffected anti-administration objector. The Embargo, hateful to the sea-

coast states, was followed by the Non-Intercourse Proclamation. New England cheated and supplied enemy ships with provisions at a huge though dangerout profit. Thus maintained, the British could hang about our shores indefinitely, raiding inland when opportunity offered. One of these naval jaunts carried an enemy force up the Pautuxent River to a point of disembarkation, whence it sauntered across country without serious opposition, captured Washington and burned the Government buildings, an adventure in arson which engendered some degree of bad feeling. Even the English considered it scarcely the sporting thing. War in those days was comparatively polite. Not being in session, Congress was spared a distressing decision between flight and fight. It reconvened in a capital even less habitable than before.

Webster was frankly and flatly a defeatist. He saw no chance of victory. If the administration persisted in its reckless course, the country would turn upon it and it would fall. He confidently expected the British to take New Orleans. He was preparing, with his fellow-Federalists in the House, to organize a concerted and direct attack upon the war. "If so, I suppose I shall shoot my little gun." Peace at any price was the aim of the group. It was not that they loved the United States less, but New England more.

An obscure and ruthless Indian fighter named Andrew Jackson deranged their calculations. The Brit-

ish, inspired by roseate hopes of plunder and adventure, "booty and beauty," delivered the long-threatened attack upon New Orleans and met with their most disagreeable surprise since the days of Washington and Nat Greene. Thereupon, a war which nobody had cared much about anyway, wilted and died. An indeterminate treaty was signed and the invaders left our shores, but continued to regard the sea as a peculiarly British possession. The Federalists, deprived of their chief issue, privately cursed Jackson, as their political heirs were still cursing him, though more publicly, twenty years later.

Other issues were not lacking. The South needed a tariff. New England, jealous for its shipping, was against it. Though he considered the tariff "a tedious, disagreeable subject," Webster stood with his section of the country as a matter of course and conveniently discovered a moral principle in free trade. He was fortunate in that he could always find moral principles in any cause which he supported and usually constitutional objections to those which he opposed. Later he became an ardent protectionist and denounced free trade as a "licentious doctrine."

The defunct Bank of the United States was seeking a new charter. Webster voted against the bill to recharter the institution, as finally enacted, but on such grounds that he commended himself to the soundest financial leaders who, when the time came, saw that

he was suitably rewarded. Afterward he became the leading adherent of the Bank against which he had voted.

His is an infinitely supple and adaptable character. We have the metamorphic apparition of a free trader who turns high protectionist, an anti-Bank man (though with important reservations) who becomes the Bank's strongest ally; a defeatist, a pacifist, an obstructionist for commercial and sectional reasons, who developed into a whole-souled patriot; a virulent sectionalist who becomes the clarion-voice of a stable and triumphant nationalism, and finally a States' rights upholder and the loosest of loose constructionists who is later to give the nation that slogan, affirmed by the blood of the Civil War, "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable." The incalculable protean capacity of the human spirit!

This does not prove Webster to be what he was so often charged with being, a renegade and a turncoat. It means merely that altering political and economic conditions impose a shift of opinion on the part of the open-minded public man. "*Tempora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis.*" Which, politically interpreted, is to say, "Times change and the responsive statesman changes with them."

Daniel Webster was, above all, a responsive statesman.

Productive, this early Congressional experience of

his was not in a legislative sense. But it was promising. He had evinced a firm grasp of financial problems. He had proved himself a formidable though defeated opponent. His oratory had become a feature of the House proceedings. Financial and commercial magnates, not only at home but in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, marked him for a useful future. He had laid the foundations for an easy, highly profitable, and steady income in the pioneer field of international claims. If Charles March could not make him rich, he could perhaps do it for himself.

He left Congress, moved to Boston, and immediately became a legal giant.

CHAPTER VII

THE SORE NEED OF MONEY

AS a lawyer Webster was the foremost orator of his day. As a legal practitioner he was an eminently successful claim-agent. Disliking the profession, holding a low opinion of its morals and having a hearty distaste for its drudgery, looking forward with a pertinacious but never realized ambition to the time when he could put away the green bag and its load of laborious papers forever, he regarded his practice mainly from the financial angle. He was an indefatigable business-getter. Fees were his aim, the glory which he won being a side-issue, and he simply could not afford to be too finical as to how he got them.

His commanding legal reputation is founded upon the Dartmouth College trial which put the Constitution squarely behind the inviolability of contract and established academic independence in America. He had small part in the legal aspects of the case, and always honorably disclaimed the credit, yet history insists on regarding the vital legal principle as his personal triumph, and college loyalty honors him as the savior and re-founder of Dartmouth. His contribution to the famous cause was eloquence, and later, perhaps,

political appeal. His loyalty to Dartmouth was non-existent.

Dartmouth was born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Endowed as the Mooer's Charity School for Aborigines by an English earl naïvely described in the words of one of the institution's beneficiaries as "a Christian lord and an uncommon one," it had for its first President a nepotic pundit, who appointed as his successor, in turn, his son, his step-son, and finally another son. When the Trustees protested, he ousted them. Becoming embroiled in local politics, the institution first split with the town of Hanover and formed a government of its own. Then it seceded from the State of New Hampshire and went Vermont for six months. After which it returned to home-state and town. The pamphleteering Allen brothers, Ethan and Ira, described its pamphleteering Faculty and President as "a Peulent, Pettifogging, Scribbling sort of Gentry that will keep any government in hot water."

Peace reigned during Webster's undergraduate years. But after the War of 1812, John Wheelock, then President, got into a row largely political with his Board of Trustees over the succession. The Board rebelliously proceeded to an election of their own candidate, Francis Brown. Wheelock went to the Legislature and had the corporate name of the institution changed from "Trustees of Dartmouth College" to "Trustees of Dartmouth University." This effectu-

ally wiped out the old Dartmouth and transferred to his control campus, buildings and equipment. A staunch Wheelock man named Allen was appointed President. While at Concord, engineering this coup, the victorious strategist met up with Daniel Webster and invited him to act as his counsel in case of litigation. Webster took the job, though he afterward tried to deny it in a lame and painfully wrought letter. To clinch the matter, Wheelock later sent a twenty dollar retainer. He took that also.

To him the whole matter was in the regular line of his profession.

"I have not the least inclination to support either side," he wrote, "except in proceedings in which my services may be professional."

Meantime the old, loyal body of alumni were raising a defense fund. A non-graduate, inspired by political rather than classical fervor, came in for $1,000. There were other generous contributions. Webster had tied himself up too soon. No such resources were at Wheelock's call. Webster's mentor, Mr. Thompson, began working upon him. His early opponent and friend, Mason, had already been retained by the fund-raisers and with him another legal luminary, Jeremiah Smith. Webster wavered. The University-Wheelock party were horrified to learn through a letter intercepted at the Hanover Post Office (academic freedom being liberally interpreted

in those days) that their champion was about deserting them. They protested and threatened. Webster calmly replied that he considered the Wheelock conversation "no professional call." He neglected to mention in what light he considered the twenty dollar fee. Perhaps he conveniently forgot about it. Or perhaps the thought of it was blotted out in the radiance of the thousand dollars for which he was presently dickering with the other side ("I doubt whether I could do it for a much less sum") and which he eventually pocketed and richly earned.

His first appearance was before the New Hampshire court where he tried out the famous "It is, sirs, a small college" appeal which has come ringing down the ages via its repetition before the United States Supreme Court and its inclusion in countless handbooks of eloquence; "and the court adjourned in tears." Having dried their eyes the judges unanimously decided against Webster and for Wheelock and the University.

For a time now the proceedings on the campus lack only a musical score to be a first-class comic opera. There were two heads of two separate and distinct collegiate governments: President Brown of the College, President Allen of the University. The University trustees, operating as agents of the New Hampshire Legislature, appointed a strong-arm squad of three "Superintendents of Buildings," who, at the opening

of the spring term, 1817, formally called upon President Brown to deliver up the key of the chapel. He refused, striking (one may be permitted to hope) a noble attitude down-stage. Equipped with hammers, augers, chisels, and bars, the dauntless three then visited the campus buildings, spiked the keyholes and affixed locks of their own in the presence of a crowd including four aborigines who were in residence "for the purpose of acquiring civilized and Christian habits."

Barred from the halls of learning, the College authorities rented Rowley's Assembly Rooms on a second floor overlooking Dartmouth Plain. A cow-horn was the substitute for the chapel bell. More than one hundred undergraduates answered it. Two days later, the University officially opened in the chapel with prayer, sacred song, President Allen, four Faculty members, and a student body consisting of one individual, a Senior. Later this was swelled to a dozen, though only one student deserted from the College. The rival undergraduates seemed to have exhibited a higher degree of amenity than their official superiors; they passed each other on the way to their respective exercises with polite bows.

Among the alumni the warfare was waged with reports, counter-reports, committees of investigation, committees of reprisal, letters to the press, anonymous pamphlets, and all the familiar armory of an em-

battled scholasticism. The Wheelock forces were in a minority, but, strong in the backing of the legislature, undertook a further offensive. The two secret societies had, by the judicious levy of fines, amassed libraries which, together, were distinctly superior to the institution's collection. It was quite within the Wheelock interpretation of the divine right of inherited power, to take over this property. At ten o'clock of night, an hour when all respectable collegians were supposed to be abed, the three Superintendents of Buildings, reënforced by half a dozen students and twice as many bellicose "townies," made a foray against the unguarded rooms of the Social Friends with axes and pries.

Late though it was, the rival organization, the United Fraternity, was holding an emergency meeting near by, probably upon a rumor of some such action against themselves. A shout was raised:

"Turn out, Social Friends! Your library is broke open."

Alarum was rung on the chapel bell. Numbers of both societies poured out, rivalry forgotten in the face of this assault. They found the besiegers already in possession. It being November, the hallways of the dormitory were piled with firewood. Arming themselves with this, and lining up at the doors, the collegians announced that no man would get out of the building with a book and his life. In the silence of

deadlock that followed, there rose a plaint from within, recognized as the voice of the town cobbler.

"This is a cursed poor scrape for a man without any education to be in. Let me home to my bed."

It was the voice of capitulation. The invading force was permitted to file out singly and bootyless, "*sub jugum*" beneath the conjoined canes and clubs of the victors. One lingered outside, a Faculty tutor and former member of the Social Friends, "crying loud and clear for his benefit of clergy," to wit, that he had fifteen dollars' worth of literature in that place and wanted it back. He was expelled for unfraternal conduct and his volumes confiscated. So ended the Battle of the Books.

There remained to the College party the slender hope of the United States Supreme Court. Webster was pessimistic over the chances of success and modestly doubtful of his own utility. What except oratory—"the nonsense," he calls it—could he add to the presentment of his technically better equipped colleagues, Mason and Smith?

> "Every one knows I can only be the reciter of the argument made by you. . . . Nothing will be expected of me but decent delivery of your matter."

But the New Hampshire pair were shrewd politicians as well as good lawyers. They had picked Web-

ster not for his legal acumen and learning in which they were his superiors, but for his ability to sway the Court by eloquence and political sympathy. They knew that in power of massing and marshaling facts, of making the best of strong points and propping with all the emphasis of his magnificent oratory, weak ones, he had no equal. Whether or not he appreciated the specialized value of his personality, his colleagues certainly did. They would attend to the preparation. He must be their mouthpiece.

On the purely legal side he made an interesting though abortive contribution. The original foundation of Dartmouth provided for the training of Aborigines.

"Where are your aborigines?" he demanded of President Brown.

"None is in attendance at present. Are they necessary?"

"The Court may raise the question."

Accordingly the College authorities went Indian hunting and brought in three young bucks. In the ferry across the Connecticut River, they got their first sight of Dartmouth Hall, rising majestic above the Plain. A building of that formidable appearance could connote but one thing to their untutored minds: only too patently they were being lured to the white man's jail. With one accord they plunged into the river and swam ashore. The forest primeval enclosed

them and Daniel Webster had to go to trial without his Exhibit A.

That his summing-up was a masterly presentation of a legally weak case there can be no doubt. But his great personal triumph was histrionic rather than legal. At the close of his four hours of closely reasoned argument, which was actually a judicious admixture of Mason and Smith in Websterian arrangement and with Websterian embellishment, he paused and seemed to hesitate. The hesitancy may have been purely theatrical. In this it was a success, for it fooled one of the shrewdest observers in Washington into thinking what followed an impromptu. "Every one saw it was wholly unpremeditated," innocently says Dillon of that emotional appeal which had already wrung tears from the New Hampshire bench. Or, Webster may really have had his misgivings, for he was about to risk upon a court which had already rebuked him for improper latitude in his plea, an appeal to emotionalism which in that high and rarefied atmosphere was presumption if not effrontery. He passed his hand across the rounded promontory of his brow. His look grew dim and tender; his voice deepened. He began that moving performance which he had been rehearsing sedulously since his first appearance in the rôle at Concord, that touching and familiar appeal of the loyal alumnus for his beloved Alma Mater:

"It is, sir, as I have said, a small college, yet there are those who love it."

"Here," recounts Prof. Goodrich of Yale, who had come to listen out of academic interest, "the feelings which he had thus far succeeded in keeping down, broke forth. His lips quivered; his firm cheeks trembled with emotion; his eyes were filled with tears; his voice choked."

How right Mason had been when he said, years before, that a great actor was lost to the stage in young Lawyer Webster! The Court was listening to such a triumph of histrionic art as no living American tragedian could have equaled, though fortunately they were unaware of this. It was an audience to spur any man to his best. On the bench, Chief Justice John Marshall; beside him the learned Story, and the cultured Livingston; Bushrod Washington, Todd, Johnson, and Duvall. In the audience many of the legal lights of the day, with a sprinkling of academic and Congressional talent.

Then the finish, possibly added in rehearsal, though more probably a repetition of the Concord effort, which is unrecorded:

"I know not how others may feel, but for myself, when I see my Alma Mater surrounded like Cæsar in the Senate House by those who are reiterating stab upon stab, I would not for this right

hand have her turn to me and say '*Et tu, quoque, mei filii!*' "

"Marshall bent forward, the deep furrows of his cheeks expanded with emotion and his eyes suffused with tears," reports Goodrich. . . . "There was not one among the strong-minded men of the assembly who could think it unmanly to weep."

The Court adjourned and the wire-pulling began. Bribery, with a personnel such as that which made up the Supreme Court bench, is unthinkable. But political influences were at work; partisan appeal had been adroitly, though improperly, brought into the court proceedings, with a special design upon those old-line Federalists, Marshall and Story. There were liberal hints, perhaps promises of a distribution of academic honors, to which even the most eminent judges might not be insensible. Both sides offended in this respect.

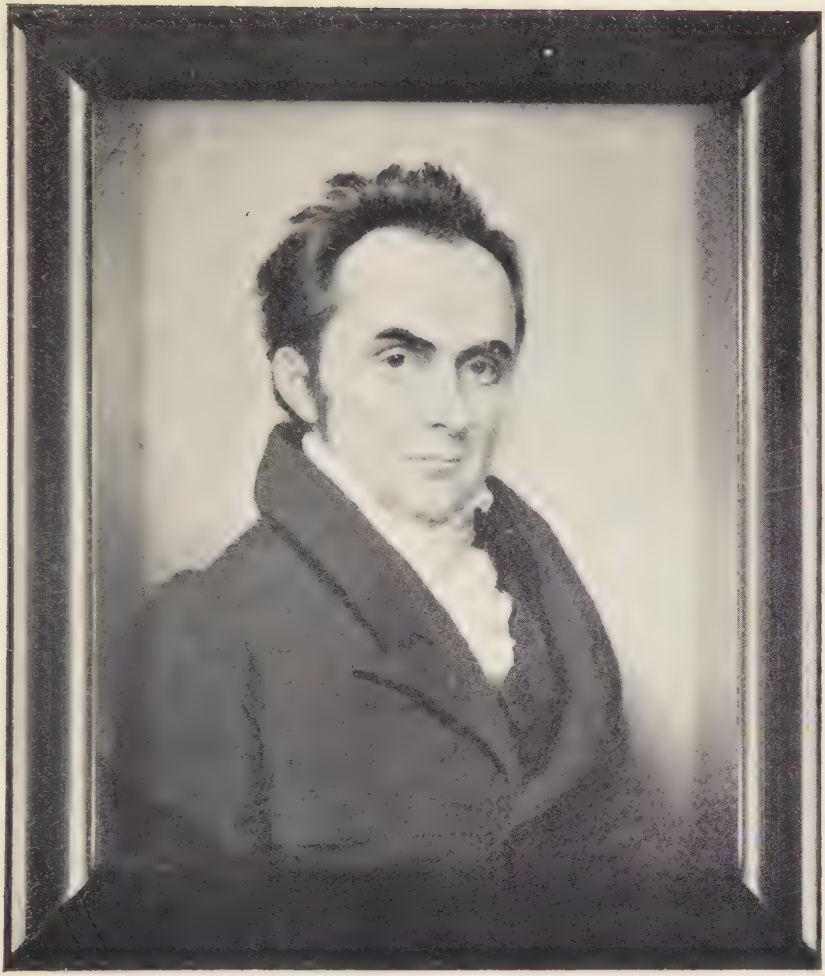
The case dragged interminably. Webster was alternately hopeful and gloomy. Story was thought to be with the College, and his influence was counted upon to sway some of the others. So impressive an authority as George F. Hoar is inclined to the belief that, but for his efforts, the case would have had a different outcome. After nearly a year's delay, judgment was handed down. The New Hampshire Court was reversed, the authority of the Trustees affirmed,

and the victory celebrated in William Cleaver Wilkinson's typical contemporary example of poesy, "Daniel Webster."

> Onset of argument,
> Volley of precedent,
> Tempest of eloquent,
> Logic and learning blent:
> Deluging blows on blows,
> He overthrows his foes.
> Dartmouth will have her own.
> Cheer thee, oh cherishing mother, in thy son.
> His task for thee is done,
> Thy battle fought and won.
> Beholders, you may go,
> That have seen this overthrow.

Business flooded in upon the successful pleader. The Bank of the United States which had been having political troubles, employed him as legal adviser in Boston. So valuable did he make himself that, one year, the directors voted him a letter of thanks and a postscript of $1,500 bonus.

Two thousand dollars, the maximum return for a year's professional activity in Portsmouth, now looked contemptible. He was presently making three, then four, then six times that income. Clients came to him from New York, from Albany, from Philadelphia, from Baltimore, from Charleston. John Jacob Astor paid him fifty dollars for looking after an overdue bill. He was establishing himself as a rich man's lawyer.



As One Woman Knew Him—This Portrait Cost the Artist $500.00
From the miniature by Sarah Goodridge painted about 1830.
(*Reproduced by courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society*)

Famous cases are connected with his name. Some owe their notoriety to his participation. Of such is the Kenniston robbery, which was a nine-days' wonder. Two brothers were accused of a highway hold-up by the man who had actually stolen the money, himself. By a shrewd bit of detective work, Webster unmasked the plot and delivered the innocent man. In any one less magnetic to public interest the episode would probably have passed unremarked.

The murder of an aged and rich man named White, which horrified New England, enlisted the great man as an aid to the prosecution. There is no doubt that his terrible and restrained eloquence before the jury was the chief influence in securing what was probably an improper and technically illegal conviction, though the guilt of the accused was clear. The triumph added largely to his fame, but did not improve his professional reputation. For here, as in the Dartmouth case, he succumbed to the temptation of money. For a prosecuting assistant to accept a fee from a private person was contrary to the Massachusetts law. Put upon the record by an objection from the defense, Webster assured the Court that he had not received and would not receive any outside remuneration. Upon the conviction of the accused, the murdered man's nephew paid Webster his fee.

He won an important cause for the millionaire Sailors' Snug Harbor Corporation at such an expendi-

ture of effort as, he declared, he expected never to repeat. In the Fulton Steamboat case, where his argument established Federal control over interstate navigation, wiped out the monopoly of Hudson River travel held by the Fulton-Livingston group, and reduced the Albany-New York fare from eight dollars to fifty cents, he did not overwork. Characteristically he postponed preparation of the case until the last moment, though he had previously and also characteristically appealed for the basis of his plea to the kindly and helpful Judge Story; and was obliged to sit up most of one night and work all the next morning to be ready. For this he received fifteen hundred dollars. "I call that short hours and good pay," he declared with pardonable exultation.

In the half-million dollar action, Binney *vs.* the Chesapeake Canal, he was observed to be feverishly intent upon authorities in Court which should have been consulted in his office. Politics, thought Charles Sumner, had "swamped his entire time and talents. All here declare that he has neglected his cases this term in a remarkable manner. It is now whispered in the room that he has not looked at the present case."

There is no doubt that he drove himself cruelly in his legislative years, and, in spite of his enormous endurance, both health and spirits suffered at times.

The loss of the Girard College will suit depressed him. Here was a cause made to order for his elo-

quence, the issue being whether a bequest to an institution, based upon the exclusion of religious instruction, should be permitted to stand. Webster struck a mighty blow for church and religion. But Court and the law were against him. When, later, he suffered another and less important defeat, he became quite pathetic about it. "I argued my case well enough and if I were not always unlucky nowadays in such cases I should think I saw a glimmering of success."

In his last famous litigation he was more happy, and closed his legal career with a $15,000 fee from the Goodyear rubber case.

Superb though he was in court, liberal though his rewards were, his stable support was from a more prosaic branch of the profession. There had accrued, from the old free-booting days of the late 18th Century, a mass of unsatisfied and often highly problematical claims for damages to shipping against France, Spain, and Denmark. Speculators had bought up many of them for a few cents on the dollar. In his first term in Congress, Webster came upon valuable data through his membership in the Committee on Foreign Relations. He organized, through his law office in Boston, a claim system mostly on contingent fee, partly on charges ranging as high as $300. His arrangement was three per cent of the amount recovered for a private client, five per cent for a jobber or a syndicate; expenses extra.

On his return to official life he capitalized his enhanced influence and authority to the uses of this promising trade.

"*My* great business of the session remains yet undone," he wrote to Mason; "that is, to get through the law for paying the Spanish claims."

His system was of an admirable simplicity. He would get a blanket bill introduced in the House or in the Senate, then instruct his Boston office to hustle out and get the business. Here is a communication, appropriately marked "Confidential" to his legal factotum, H. W. Kinsman.

> "The subject is the French claims, before 1800. I moved on that subject, early in the session—had a committee appointed—myself at the head of it, and we have reported a bill. By proper pains this Bill *will assuredly pass*. . . . It is time therefore, I think, to move in the matter of the agency. If the Gentlemen in interest in our quarter, desire my aid, I wish them to settle that point, before a host of other persons apply. . . . If this can be done, to such an extent as to make it an object, you may say to Mr. Brooks that it is my intention very much to relinquish other professional employment and give my strictest personal attention to this business. It will be an object to do so, provided I can obtain

the agency of the greater part of the interest, in our region. . . . Tell Mr. Brooks there is nobody here, out of doors, that can do any good."

When the Danish composition looked favorable, he had foreknowledge of it. To Kinsman, once more:

"DEAR SIR: There is a treaty with *Denmark;* it will be well for you to go immediately to Mr. Snelling and get him to go with you to the other offices and secure the agency of these claims.

"Yours, D. WEBSTER."

Whereupon the faithful aide would go forth and sign up the claimants under power of attorney on the fixed terms. It should have been simple for him to prove that "nobody here out of doors" could possibly "do any good" as compared to the very much indoors Mr. Webster.

A constituent would write, urging the legislator to press for the delayed indemnity. Here was a prospective client, to be referred to Kinsman.

"Mr. Charles Russell of New Bedford has a claim; I believe, a large one. *You* might write to him saying you are connected with me and that we should be willing to take the agency of his claim."

Thus we see our enterprising statesman in the remunerative process of making his legislative right

hand wash his business-getting left. The case is by no means unique.

Notwithstanding that political ethics of the day were looser than in our time, his activities subjected him to suspicion. The sternly scrupulous Calhoun early said of him: "There is no confidence in him. His integrity is questioned by almost all of any party." Crony of Webster's though he was, Clay was disgusted with his course in pushing the Spanish claim bill. "It will put sixty thousand dollars in that God-damned yellow rascal's pocket," he growled. Fearing so powerful a man's opposition, Webster persuaded Buchanan to take over charge of the measure. His own estimate of the return to him was ten thousand dollars higher than Clay's.

The French adjustment hung fire interminably. Suddenly, in 1846, there was promise of action. Webster, then in the Senate, was in more than usually desperate need of funds. He was being sued on unpaid notes. Trouble was pending over Government funds which he had drawn and failed to account for. His Western lands had been swallowed by the banks. To his eldest son, a chronic job-hunter, he writes:

> "Dear Fletcher: Beyond all expectation, the Bill for the old French Claims will probably pass the House to-day (I believe it has passed). Give notice immediately, that you propose to act

as agent for claimants, before the Board. Set all your friends immediately at work. I will help you do the business and so you may say—though not publicly—stir quick."

The bill had actually passed. Here was bright hope. The five per cent contingencies would mount to such figures as would extricate him from all his difficulties. Alas for political forecasts! That incalculable President, Polk, vetoed the bill. This executive malfeasance cost the go-getting Senator-lawyer-agent thousands of sorely needed dollars.

Posterity has ascribed to Webster a higher rank than his professional contemporaries allowed him. No one could equal him as a court pleader; there his grand manner, his irresistible magnetism and his eloquence gave him unequaled reputation. But he was not by any means the legal authority that history carelessly pictures him. A man's technical achievement is best measured by the estimate of his competitors. Webster was not a lawyer's lawyer. His legal scholarship was brilliant and adaptable rather than profound. In spite of his sonorous honorifics, "Upholder of the Constitution," "Defender of the Constitution," "Great Interpreter," he was not even reckoned the first Constitutional lawyer of his time. In that place, Chief Justice Marshall, whose opinion Webster would have been the first to honor, named one Walter Jones. It

is true that, after his death, Seward declared that "the fifty thousand lawyers of the United States conceded to him an unapproachable supremacy at the bar." Fifty thousand lawyers can't be wrong, perhaps. But they can be elegiac. So, in this case, we may guess, was Mr. Seward.

With law, Webster dealt as with money. He borrowed. His correspondence is full of hopeful solicitations upon his deeper-read contemporaries for their opinions and citations. He appealed to Mason, to Judge Smith, to Chancellor Kent (who drily indicated that Mr. Webster would better do his own professional delving); to William Wirt, to Joseph Hopkinson, who wrote "Hail, Columbia!" and mainly to Judge Story. Everybody appealed to Judge Story for legal aid. He was a law-professor and a sort of free consulting agency on all knotty points. Both as lawyer and diplomat, the Massachusetts statesman sought his aid. Would Story loan him an hour of his time? Would Story draw up a bankrupt law for him (the same one which gave Webster an international reputation) and set down his authorities in the margin? He, Webster, had been "very neglectful," and could Story let him know about equity appeals: must bond be given? Would Story cover some moot points in navigation law for him? Would he give a day or two of his time to the McLeod murder evidence, upon which a possible war with England hung? Should

there be a treaty to cover the Hogan case? Was the 40th printed rule on debt then in force? If his learned friend supplied the authorities he, Webster, knew that he could be sure of them. A wit of literary as well as legal leanings remarked when the great pleader entered court, poring over a sheaf of papers:

"Now we shall have Webster, trailing clouds of Story."

When the eminent jurisconsult died, his executors wrote to the prominent lawyers of the day, requesting that his letters be returned for use in a biography.

Webster refused. It is one of the few ungenerous actions of his life.

CHAPTER VIII

DANIEL MEETS AN EMPEROR

THERE impinges early and often upon the pattern of our man's financial and political program, a puissant figure. "High-toned," that superlative laudation of the period, best fits the personality of Nicholas Biddle, "Emperor Nick of the Bribery Bank." He was a man of opulent, almost womanish beauty, extraordinary personal charm, high social prestige, and lively intelligence. Diplomat, litterateur, and beau, he became a reform financier through the casual circumstance of having written a treatise on economics for his magazine. He was elegant in mind and body, of scrupulous personal honor, autocratic without arrogance, and a fanatical devotee of the wealth and power entrusted to him.

When at the age of thirty-seven he became president of the second Bank of the United States, Webster, four years his senior, was one of its most valued counsel. An alliance was formed between the two which remained close and, as far as might be, secret, throughout the banker's life. The mutual reaction of their characters was detrimental to both, but chiefly to that of the weaker, Webster.

"We have chartered a public nuisance," proclaimed a disgusted legislator when the bill establishing the second Bank of the United States passed.

He might with equal justice have said that they had chartered a public riot. In the next two decades "the Monster," as its foes called it, ramped through American politics like a circus elephant through a county fair. It was the most provocative issue of its time. It embroiled four Presidents of the United States, censured one, made one, and undid two. "Its corrupting influence has been extended everywhere that could add to its strength," pronounced Jackson, and Calhoun more ringingly said, "A power has risen up in the Government greater than the people themselves, consisting in many and various and powerful interests, combined into one mass and held together by the cohesive power of the vast surplus in the banks."

Nuisance or not, it was a necessity. Something had to be done in the interests of stability and to offset the methods of the private institutions. Banking had been largely conducted on the principles of a gold-rush, and the ethics of a three-card monte game. Any one could be a banker. There were few requirements and no effective supervision. To be sure, a certain ratio of the capital must be in specie, but official curiosity on this point was seldom carried to extremes. On opening day a truck, laden with kegs, would draw up at the door and unload. Before the inspecting official one of the

kegs, broached, poured forth its guaranty of gold, silver and copper amidst general cheers. On the assumption that the rest were of similar content, they were rolled into vaults, everybody had drinks and a new bank was born. The directors might then loan out the money on any or no security. Said the New York *Sun:*

> "Banking facilities were in everybody's reach. Almost everybody was on some board of directors, or had a father, brother, cousin, friend or acquaintance there. When that was not the case, an endorser could be had for a premium."

The Hancock Bank of Boston, capitalized at $500,000, loaned to its president $210,000, to one director $160,000 and to another the remaining $130,000. It then closed its doors. When it is remembered that such pasteboard financial constructions as this could and did issue bank notes practically ad lib., the desirability of a bank of national character and firm status is evident. To this standard the second Bank of the United States attained after some vicissitudes. Its notes circulated like gold. Its stock was above par. It could stay panics. Unfortunately it could also make them. All this was due to the ability, the integrity, the autocracy of Nicholas Biddle.

Hardly had he settled into harness, when his mettle

was tested by one of those panics which recurred like epidemics in the first half of the 19th Century. He met it with all the resources of the Bank and its branches. By a policy at once prudent and liberal, he maintained the interest rate on loans at the then low figure of six per cent and thus tided over the situation. He was regarded as a public benefactor. President John Quincy Adams admired and trusted him.

Politics did not interest Nicholas Biddle. All that he asked was to run his business without interference. But the Bank was too intricately involved in governmental affairs to escape meddlesome hands. Clay and Webster, on one side, Jackson and Van Buren on the other, were scheming and counter-scheming. Biddle found his institution being made the football of their ambitions. He had to defend himself against a powerful journalistic cabal organized for Jackson when he became President.

Newspaper backing was needed. Webster advised a large loan to an influential publisher. The suggestion shocked the banker; he declared it unbusinesslike and improper. But the vicious interaction of finance and politics relaxed his scruples. He bought editorial opinion by liberal "loans," justifying himself by the argument that newspaper support was a service which must be paid for like any other. The hostile *New York Courier & Inquirer*, controlled by a journalist

of more power than principle named Webb, changed its attitude over night, in response to the Biddle benefactions. The *National Intelligencer*, the *Washington Telegraph* and other publications received generous support. "Dinner funds" for state legislators were inaugurated; favors were extended to national statesmen. The "Bribery Bank" began to justify its nickname. Biddle was fighting fire with fire and the smoke thereof rose and spread and blackened many a reputation. Even legitimate dealings with the Bank became dangerous, and were conducted as quietly as possible, to avoid the taint which attached to its operations. Charges were recklessly made in the newspapers, from platforms, and in the halls of Congress. The most extreme of them fell short of the amazing truth.

Much of the record is preserved in the Biddle correspondence. He was a most industrious penman, maintaining a huge connection, business and political. The more obviously private and confidential a communication was, the more carefully he filed it for reference. He was a methodical man. Or perhaps he had the autograph vice.

The Bank was now more powerful than any financial institution, before or since. Its assets were one hundred million dollars. Compared to this our modern billion-dollar mergers are insignificant. It had thirteen and a half millions in deposits, fifty per cent

of which were United States funds. The parent bank at Philadelphia, with its twenty-five branches in the principal cities, was the fiscal center of the country and its president the financial dictator. Not only his fortune, but his conscience, his honor, and his pride were invested in the institution.

The great battle of Jackson's Presidential incumbency was over the re-charter of the Bank. Webster and Clay, both in the pay of Biddle as lawyers, both heavily indebted to the Bank on insufficient if not sham security, led its fight in the Senate. But through some oversight, payments to Webster lapsed, just when the enemy were massing their strength against the "Monster." The lawyer sent a reminder to his principal. It begins, short and sharp, "Sir" instead of "Dear Sir" or "My dear Sir" which he customarily employed to Biddle.

> "Since I arrived here [Washington] I have had an application to be concerned professionally vs. the Bank, which I have declined, of course, although I believe my retainer has not been received or *refreshed* as usual. If it be wished that my relation to the Bank should be continued, it may be well to send me the usual retainers."

As a clear-visioned person and prone to a mild cynicism regarding the motives of public men, the recipient would doubtless have made certain deductions.

He would have reflected that any Senatorial investigation of the Bank would be in the hands of the Committee on Finance, Daniel Webster, chairman, and that the adherence (even though it were on the basis of professional services) of so important an official would be desirable. Going as far as charity will permit and allowing that the letter is free from any intent of political coercion, the nature of the impact upon the financier's practical mind is easy to predict; also the result. He promptly "refreshed" the retainer. Amicable legal relations were restored never thereafter to be interrupted.

As was forecast, the Bank was cited for investigation by committees from both houses of Congress. "Show them nothing," Biddle directed his subordinates, and when they returned to Washington whimpering for contempt proceedings, John Quincy Adams, out of the Presidency and back in Congress, anticipated Tweed with the taunt, "What are you going to do about it?" Congress, being impotent to do anything, did nothing.

To the Senatorial investigators, Biddle was all suavity. Here he had nothing to fear. Any information or data compatible with the privacy of individual accounts was at their disposal. Chairman Webster wrote him advance news of the report which was to consider bribery, usury, over-loaning to directors, favors to office holders and misuse of funds.

"Everything relative to your affairs stands well. Nothing is said about loans to directors. . . . The Report acquits the public men of the country, of all sides, from any such influence on their conduct as the Bank could exert."

People will say, he added, that Mr. Webster wrote the report. Not he! Mr. Webster had "sense enough," he flattered himself, to delegate that risky duty to Senators Ewing and Mangum. John Tyler, afterwards President, was the fourth member. He kept out of it, too.

As to the acquittal of the public men, a curious document survives, in the bold and beautiful handwriting of Biddle which probably covers this period, and may have been intended as a bomb in case extreme measures were indicated. "List of drawers and endorsers of notes: members of Congress, Editors of newspapers, and officers of the General Government," it is endorsed. Webster is down for $17,782.86 (it afterward rose to more than $38,000); Clay for $7,500 (at one time $22,000); Forsyth, $20,000; ex-President Monroe, $10,596; J. Watson Webb, afterward bankrupt, of the *Courier & Inquirer*, $18,000; Gales and Seaton of the *National Intelligencer*, $32,360; Duff Green of the *Telegraph*, $15,600; Amos Kendall of the *Globe*, who was an influential member of Jackson's "kitchen cabinet,"

$5,375; and various amounts to Calhoun, Johnson, Livingston, Eaton, Crawford, and other potential Presidents, Supreme Court Justice Baldwin, Speaker of the House Stevenson, and a total list of fifty-five including Senators, Congressmen and diplomats.

Many of the transactions may have been innocent, proper, and in the regular way of a bank's business. The loan to ex-President Monroe, for example, could hardly have been based upon any expectation of favors. Secretary Livingston is down for only $1,000. Webster always insisted that his own dealings were on a strictly business basis. But they are too secret to be reassuring. He writes to Biddle:

> "I would readily mortgage 50,000 dolls. property in Massachusetts and New Hampshire if the conveyance could be made to anybody not connected with the bank. But I must avoid that, for considerations connected with the future as well as the past."

For a brief time he seems to have been financially clear:

> "M. Robinson:
>
> "Agent B. U. S. [Bank of the United States]
>
> "New York.
>
> "I am exceedingly mortified at the delay in taking up the debt. Some singular mistake must

have happened. Hearing of the matter yesterday from Boston, I sent a check there to pay it. Learning that it is now sent to you, I enclose a check on Merchants Bank for balance due, viz. 4400. Whatever there may be of interest or damages please charge to my account.

"Daniel Webster."

In less than a year he was back again for a much larger sum.

He helped Biddle engineer the panic of 1833. For once the astute and self-controlled financier had taken counsel of that dangerous adviser, Revenge. Jackson had threatened to withdraw the Government deposits from the Bank. Thus wrote its head:

"The worthy president thinks that because he has scalped Indians and imprisoned judges, he is to have his way with the Bank. He is wrong."

It was the banker who was wrong. He lost his temper and set out to produce a panic by way of teaching the guilty public which had elected Jackson a lesson. Webster referred to it as a "discipline of the public." Some degree of retrenchment by the Bank was logical and a measure of safety. But Biddle clamped on the screws violently. Loans were called, wholesale, in every branch.

The scare operated with gratifying fidelity to program. Stocks crashed. Money went to eighteen per

cent. Factories shut down. Business became paralytic. The jobless walked the streets. A New York firm with $110,000 in unimpeachable assets failed for $25,000. Distress petitions, genuine and doctored, flooded the "Panic Session" of Congress. Mass meetings of artisans and mechanics were engineered in the large cities. The depleted widow and orphan figured largely. Lugubrious deputations visited the President. "Why do you come to me?" demanded Jackson. "Go to Nicholas Biddle." They shouldn't leave that foundling on his doorstep!

It was a particularly lively and emotional session of Congress. Webster thundered in the Senate (one of more than seventy speeches from his mouth on the subject) that if the Jackson measures were carried out "the Constitution will have perished," and Biddle circulated the dire prophecy extensively in pamphlet form. Jackson did withdraw the Government funds, and the Constitution, strangely enough, survived. So did the Bank. When the debate was on, the "Ruffle-shirts" (Bank partisans) packed the galleries with best citizens and fashionable ladies who whooped and hooted when a heckled orator yelled "Bank ruffians!" at them. One Senatorial defender of the administration became so overwrought that he fainted on the floor, and his successor in the argument fell in a fit and developed brain fever. Benton was warned not to take the floor against the Bank unless he had his pis-

tol with him. Battle, murder and sudden death hovered on the agitated air when Webster's Finance Committee reported a motion censuring the President. Eventually it passed, and much valuable time together with breath of less value were expended in getting it expunged from the Senate's records.

The Whigs, who were actually the Bank party, grew restive in an alliance which rendered them vulnerable. There were mutterings. Even Webster thought the situation unpromising. "If any political party or Association desires to separate itself from the Bank," said the Emperor with the formidable quiet of implicit power, "be it so." Webster and Clay, however, were bound by political as well as personal advantage. Each thought himself the future Bank candidate. The Emperor was mulling over the thought of quite another man: viz., Nicholas Biddle, himself. Assurances from Southern Whigs told him that he was more popular there than Webster. But it came to nothing. Naturally desirous of the kind of support which the Bank with its twenty-five widespread branches could contribute, Webster wrote letters to its president, seeking to undermine Clay: marked them "For no other eye but yours," "Private as Murder," and the like. Biddle read, digested, and duly filed them for preservation. But he preferred Clay to Webster. The latter he thought too big for the Vice-Presidency; not quite suited to the Presidency. He was too tactful to let the

Massachusetts statesman suffer from any inkling of his preference.

After one of the most virulent fights in our history, the Bank failed of its re-charter. The triumvirate, Biddle, Clay, and Webster, tried to resuscitate it under another name, but Tyler's veto prevented. It ruined Tyler politically—Biddle was potent enough for that—and involved Webster in the catastrophe. Biddle's own ruin was of another kind. With the Bank dissolved, in so far as its national character is concerned, he became president of the Philadelphia remnant, but resigned after two years. The institution failed. Although its ex-president had no legal responsibility whatsoever, being not even a director, he felt that his name and his honor were involved by long association. He threw his own private fortune into the bottomless pit of stupid financing, with no other result than to cripple himself.

He became an object of mob hatred, of vicious threats. It did not disturb the even, courageous and dignified tenor of his way. His own state tried him for bribery. He beat the case. His last political manifestation was a courteous request proffered to Secretary of State Webster, for the appointment as minister to the secondary but agreeably aristocratic court of Vienna. Webster replied, not too graciously, that the appointment belonged to the tobacco-growing industry of Virginia.

Nicholas Biddle died in his early fifties and William Cullen Bryant, in an obituary uninspired by the *nil-nisi-bonum* precept, said that his declining years should have been spent in the penitentiary. Technically this may have been true. Actually it was unjust to a single-minded, loyal and, on the whole, honorable character.

To Webster he was a faithful friend, an ever-present help in time of need, and a firm ally, and, by one of those anomalies so common in politics, but for him the godlike one might well have been President of the United States.

CHAPTER IX

A CONGRESSMAN'S BUSY DAY

THE Representative of Suffolk County, Mass., walked slowly down the steps of his lodgings off Pennsylvania Avenue. The sun was just up. It lighted a vista of rugged thoroughfare, in the foreground of which two abandoned hacks jutted up like melancholious islands, having been left there in yesterday's storm until better weather should permit their extrication. From the front stoop, where he hesitated, reluctant to risk his elegant boots in the mire, he could "look out on one side upon a noble street without any houses, and on the other upon a showy bank without any money."

Early breakfast would be ready at Gadsby's: perhaps he would be wise to take quarters there. Too many of those infernal Democrats and demagogues about: but there were some good Federalists, too. He was in a position to pick his own associates. First, he would step into the bar and have an eye-opener as precaution against the morning chill. Then breakfast and leisure to run through the *National Intelligencer* before later risers drifted in.

He turned to the foreign news. It was his specialty

to keep posted on that. Nothing much there. At home the Abolitionists were kicking up a mess again. A feeble but pestilent crew. He hated slavery as much as any one: he would do what he could to mitigate its rigors; he would fight to the death against its further extension. But violence of denunciation, threats of secession and such impiety as calling Washington a bloodhound because he owned slaves, could serve no good purpose. They lacked sense of proportion, those fanatics. He had recently attended an evening party where a lady Abolitionist recited a pathetic poem wherein was featured a scene at a dinner party waited upon by slave-women. The shocking fate of one of these unfortunates was thus described:

> Why streams the life blood from that female's throat?
> She sprinkled gravy on a guest's new coat.

Absurd! He had laughed, perhaps not too politely, for glances of reprehension had been directed at him. The episode might have lost him a vote or two. Well, he did not need them. He carried the district in his pocket. . . .

A long disquisition on the Tariff. Tedious subject, the Tariff. Yet it might prove troublesome later as the rift between the commercial interests of the North and the South widened. More important than Abolitionism would ever become. What was this? "Re-

markable Achievement in Pedestrianism." A man had run a mile in six minutes and fourteen seconds, out of doors. It seemed hardly credible. That was faster than a stage-coach traveled. "It is said that a million and a half dollars and eight hundred slaves changed ownership on the result of the horse race last week." Part of it had changed from his hands. At least that was better than risking it in the Grand National Lottery where a winning number was as unprofitable as a losing, the management having brazenly repudiated the first prize of one hundred thousand dollars. . . . He must remember to furnish notes to Gales and Seaton of the *Intelligencer*, for an editorial supporting the French claims.

Three waiters with trays set out the breakfast, a stock Gadsby menu. There were tea, coffee, beefsteaks, oysters, eggs, ham and eggs, sausage, deviled kidneys; breads of wheat, rye, Indian meal, and mixed; pancakes, buckwheat cakes, hoe cakes, johnny cakes, Indian cakes; together with sugar, both foreign (white) and domestic (brown) molasses, honey, pepper-vinegar, cider-vinegar, and mustard; also bottles containing whiskey, gin and rum, with wine if desired, but that was extra. After doing justice to this menu, Mr. Webster would sometimes feel an uncomfortable stuffiness about the chest which he attributed to the morning miasma exhaling from the swampy places.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Congressman Webster."

"Good morning to you, Mr. Congressman Livingston. Will you sit, sir?"

No, with proper acknowledgment, Mr. Livingston would not sit. He had stopped on his way to the center table only to offer a word upon the parlous state of the nation. It was much the political fashion to be gloomy, in private conversation between statesmen. Mr. Webster agreed with him. He deplored the self-seeking of a partisan era.

"There is, sir, a Federal interest, a Democratic interest, a Bankrupt interest, an Orthodox interest, and a Middling interest, but I see no National interest nor any national feeling in the whole matter."

Livingston passed on, wagging an ominous head. The breakfast room was filling up.

"Boy! Boy! You, thay-ah, Sambo!"

The voice, a throaty pipe, signalized the arrival of a freakish apparition; very tall, very thin, scrawny of neck, the chin barely shadowed with fuzz like that of immature boyhood; a laughable homunculus but for the eyes, hollow and terrible, that burned below the square brow. He wore silver-spurred riding boots and gloves and carried a whip; a hound slunk close to heel.

The head waiter and two others hurried to him.

"Who is that person who presumes to sit at my table?" fluted the formidable grotesque.

Profuse apologies from the waiters did not appease him. Under his scowl the "person," a commercial gentleman from New York, removed himself. He had caught the name "Randolph of Roanoke" passing around the room, and had no wish to involve himself with so dangerous an individual.

The new arrival proceeded to his chosen place, bestowing bows, condescending or contemptuous, upon his acquaintances. Several gentlemen approached his table beneath which the spurs jingled and the dog couched. In reply to some remark the virulent Virginian's tones rose like the caw of a derisive raven.

"I do not train my weapons upon weathercocks, sir."

Congressman Webster started. Could that be a taunt for him, aimed at his expedient change of attitude on the tariff? There was ill blood between the two; an old challenge was still latent; it might still contain potentialities of absurdity or tragedy; one could never tell which, with Randolph. But that human curiosity was now calling:

"Toddy, Sambo! Be spry, I adjure you, if you would preserve a valued life."

More than one in the room, who had been stung by the classic and reckless wit of that tongue, privately commented that few except its owner would set high value upon his life. Congressman Forsyth, coming across to shake hands with his colleague, Webster,

murmured as much. Webster smiled. Others stopped to greet him; he was invited to several tables, a popular and respected figure. He declined. He must get on to the House and dispatch some important letters. His finances were in poor shape; they seemed always to be in poor shape now, though he was making a good income. That country place at Marshfield was costing more than he had foreseen. Some one had said that the adjoining farm to the northwest was for sale: he must keep an eye on that. As for the money, Mr. Franklin Haven of the Merchants Bank would advance it to him: or if not Mr. Haven, Mr. Alfred Curtis or Mr. Samuel Frothingham. Those Boston millionaire-men had been generous, and ought to be. Was he not looking after their interests faithfully? Memo: write Mr. Haven about the course of bank legislation; he expected to be kept *au courant*. Memo: to bid Kinsman of the Boston office follow up that new line of Spanish claims. Memo: to ask Story for an opinion on the filing of bond in an equity suit; with all his legislative duties, he could not find time to look up authorities himself. Memo: to write Grace about coming down. A good wife, Grace—the best of wives—he was devotedly fond of her. A pity that she liked Washington so little.

He got his capacious hat—no fear of a casual exchange; there was not its match in Washington for diameter—and lighted his segar as he stepped out-

side. An accost from a Virginia gentleman, with an old soldier in tow, stopped him.

"Mr. Webster, I wish this worthy veteran of our war for liberty to have the honor of meeting you."

A hero of the Revolution? The occasion called for something special. The orator's hand, withdrawn from the shaking clasp of the aged admirer, was thrust into the rounded coat-front. He addressed his audience as follows:

"Sir, I am told that I have the honor to take by the hand a soldier of the Revolution: a companion in arms of Washington and Marshall and that whole band of heroes who won for us the independence of our country: by the aid of whose valor we now form one of the nations of the earth. Sir, I am glad to meet you: I am glad to meet any Revolutionary Soldier of Virginia. Virginia, sir, stood shoulder to shoulder with Massachusetts, my adopted state and with New Hampshire, my native state, in the great struggle in which you have a part. . . . May a benign Providence bless your remaining years and may you be gathered to your fathers in peace. Sir, I bid you a grateful farewell."

And he descended the steps with measured tread, leaving the veteran as gratified as a public meeting.

On up the Avenue he went, covering the ground with deceptive speed, for he was an easy walker. The bustle of the slave-market, preparing for the day's

auction, came to his ears, and he scowled. Idlers and society people went there as to a public show, for the head auctioneer was reckoned a witty fellow. How could they! He had witnessed sights there to wring the heart . . . young mothers . . . terrified children . . . freedmen sold back into bondage on the perjury of some brutal flesh-broker. How he hated the whole cruel business! . . . Two black fellows, passing on their way to market, touched their caps and murmured his name shyly; he knew that they had paused to look after him with wonder and speculation in their eyes, and he knew why. A story was current among them that the Massachusetts statesman had an African strain in his lineage; "Black Dan." It was his blood that so terribly denounced, in the Plymouth address, the continued manufacture on Puritan soil of slave-shackles. The subject of this superstition did not resent it. Secure in the purity of his descent, he thought it amusing and a little touching.

A magnificent horse, with a spare, straight figure sticking up like a lath from the saddle, approached. John Randolph again, and riding straight toward him. There was no predicting at what moment the maggot at that feverous brain would drive him to some insult or offense too gross to be endured. The Yankee was by no means afraid of the fighting Virginian—he was quite competent to protect his person and his dignity—but the code duello had still many adherents, and the

most resolute refusal of its provocation subjected a gentleman to suspicion. It was not in Daniel Webster's character to turn aside in avoidance of any man; nevertheless, he drew a breath of relief when the crazy and tragic horseman, setting sudden spurs to his exasperated mount, bolted around a corner and was gone.

Congressman Webster was now approaching the new legislative pile, the most complete picture of which has survived in the brisk critique of the sprightly Robert G. Sands:

> "That hall where all the splendor of the marbles, serpentiles, and breccias of America and Italy, and all the graces and proportions of Grecian art, and all the talents of successive architects—of the luxurious L'Enfant, the magnificent Latrobe, and the practical Bulfinch—aided by the decorations of accomplished sculptors, foreign and domestic, and set off by all the gorgeousness of modern upholstery and Honduras mahogany, wrought and polished by the master artists of New York and Philadelphia, have conspired to make a room utterly unfit for any earthly purpose to which it can ever be applied: where people can neither see nor hear one another, containing, according to accurate admeasurement, 200,000 cubic feet: and in consequence thereof and of other enormous advantages, uncomfort-

able to sit in, unhealthy to stay in, and dangerous to legislate in, alike for the people and the lawmakers."

The corridors through which he approached were magnificent but mussy. Papers, cigar butts, and an occasional bottle were strewn about. In the hall itself the scheme of disorder was further carried out by a legislator asleep across the desk where the effects of yesterday's labors had overtaken him. Two early sight-seers were about.

"My son," said the elder in a half-whisper, which was magnified in the empty gallery, "you are looking upon a future President of the United States. That is Daniel Webster of Massachusetts. Take pattern of his industry."

The prophecy gratified the statesman. He knew that it was of expanding currency in New England. Why not? It was certainly logical enough. The Federalists must be the controlling party in spite of the increase in the power of the Democratic rabble, and he was the representative Federalist of the East. His State Street friends were pressing him to go to the Senate; the election was his for the asking. He would be a candidate now but for John Quincy Adams. A fussy irascible little man, the President, but an unimpeachable patriot. He needed and insisted on Webster's eloquence to lead the administration forces on

the floor of the House. That would not last forever. Then the Senate or possibly the London post—diplomacy, for which he felt himself peculiarly fitted, lent dignity and weight to a career—or a Cabinet position, leading to the highest office. As to financing this glorious succession, he had some profitable ideas on the development of land ventures, and his friends in the banks would always stand ready to oblige with what was needful. Memo: to write Kinsman about drawing on that rich client in New York; he would probably honor a draft in advance for two thousand dollars; perhaps even for four.

A packet of notes on his desk. Invitations, notifications of honorary election to college fraternities, learned societies, fishing and hunting clubs. Requests to deliver addresses, patriotic, literary, partisan. Notice of a ball at the newly opened Assembly Rooms. Very elegant, doubtless, but why should Washington ape the more fashionable Philadelphia? For his part he had small taste for these "lighted halls crammed full of fools and fiddles," and Grace still less. Homey folks and homey manners were more to his liking. He added a sentence to the letter which he had begun:

> "There is nobody here to come in of an evening and pull off his overshoes, coats and handkerchiefs, and sit down to regular social talk. I'm dreadful homesick."

The House was being called to order by Mr. Speaker Clay, perched in the gingerbread pulpit overhung by a plaster virago, "like a lobster in a pagoda," as some irreverent member had observed (unofficially). Clay was hard to understand. For example, his course in the matter of the Spanish Claims bill. Why should he interfere with a friend's legitimate profits? Was he envious? One never could be quite sure of Clay. But he was popular—vastly popular. Men followed him slavishly, women adoringly. That quality of leadership was mysterious. Was it to be acquired? Congressman Webster knew that he could swing men's minds, compel their admiration and respect. Was he not already the acknowledged leader of his party in his own State, more potent than either of the Senators? But here in Washington among his peers he felt less certain of himself. Clay's trick of instinctive, magnetic mastery troubled him. The Kentuckian was more at ease with him than he with the Kentuckian. Yet they were boon companions in lighter moments. . . . All those Southerners had an air of conscious though unassertive superiority. If he ever descended to profanity, that was one thing that would make him swear.

The Hall was filling up, not only with the members but with their friends and ladies who made free of the floor. To be taken to the Senate and the House and presented to the leading figures was an essential

feature of the social régime for visiting débutantes from Baltimore or Philadelphia. There was an unusual crowd this morning. A flutter of voices and a reek of mingled perfumes feminized the atmosphere. Some popular member must be down for a speech. Should Mr. Webster himself afford them the gratification of hearing him? It was always a great occasion when he, who was called superior to Burke, to Cicero, to Demosthenes, was on the calendar. But to what point should he address himself? There was nothing prepared in his portfolio on the subject of internal improvements, the day's dull but politically fertile topic, and he did not speak impromptu. He had no gift that way.

An unfortunate from New Jersey, with no gift in that or any other way, was pathetically pleading to be heard. "If, within the command of my poor faculties . . ." The rest was lost in buzz and chatter. A girl's laughter, high and fresh, brought the gentleman to a despairing pause. He appealed frantically to the gingerbread pulpit, but only the plaster virago answered the regard of his uplifted eyes. Mr. Speaker Clay was strolling down the aisle with a lovely bud of girlhood hanging on either arm and looking adoringly up into his smiling face. The one who secured his coat-flower for a guerdon would be the envied personage of the day in Washington's younger set. One Philadelphia beauty preserved in sanctity a pair of

white gloves which he had removed to shake hands with her.

Representative Webster moved slowly out of the Hall, pleasantly conscious of a hush where he passed. In the open space before the building was manifested a social phenomenon of another kind. Here, too, were ladies; the nameless, fameless, and presumptively shameless denizens of a lower and gayer world. When he had first come to Congress, Mesdames Anonymæ mingled freely with their more decorous sisters on the floor and in the galleries, to the occasional discomfiture of the less experienced members who were sometimes unable to distinguish one from t'other, and fell into painful error. Speaker Clay, being possessed of a social conscience, segregated them in specified portions of the building. Purists called for their banishment, whereupon revolution hummed in the wrathful, if private, protests of outraged Solons. After all, one did not come to Washington exclusively to attend caucuses!

The Madam who bowed ingratiatingly to the emergent Gentleman from Massachusetts sat under a sunshade in the open. Before her a richly damasked table displayed its profusion of cold viands and enticing decanters, grouped about a punchbowl exhalant of rare and potent fragrances. Solicitous in attendance upon her mistress, hovered a comely octoroon wench. In the background stood an impressive mansion of a

nature which left nothing to dubiety, peopled as it was by extremely obvious young persons, various of shade but uniform of sex. It was the most advantageously placed *maison* in the city and enjoyed a large official patronage.

To the mutely lifted eyebrows of Madam, Mr. Webster returned a courteous but lofty bow. He understood that he was being invited to do nothing more compromising than eat a slice of special Virginia ham and try a beaker of the punch, for this was open house to legislators and their friends; but he had a meeting of his Judiciary Committee to preside over and a mess engagement downtown afterward. Therefore he declined, but merely as one evades any other casual and courteous proffer of hospitality. Moral indignation would have been absurd in that day and place. Mr. Webster, though a bit of a formalist, was no prude.

On the way to the mess, after committee adjournment, he passed a figure sitting, very stiff and elegant, in a private equipage which he recognized as the Pinkney coach. Could it be William Pinkney? Then, with a shock, he recalled his wandering wits. Pinkney was dead and buried. Who, then, was this simulacrum of him? Some cousin, perhaps. The similarity awoke distasteful memories of that elderly, learned, and malicious fop whom no stranger would ever have taken for the most profound and authorita-

tive representative of the legal profession of his day, outside of the Supreme Court bench. With his snowy linen, his long, beribboned stick like the staff of a pilgrim who had stepped aside from his quest to go a-fairing, his tight, white gloves which he always drew on when rising to address the court lest he should soil those dainty hands by the rude contacts of the law, his gracefully molded coat and his vests, less conspicuous than Mr. Webster's multicolored adventures in that department, he always suggested a dilettante of fashion on his way to some perfumed rendezvous.

Mr. Webster knew better. He had suffered at Mr. Pinkney's hands more than once in court. That wearily supercilious manner of his, which one never knew quite how to resent effectually! And his way of impugning one's authorities; worse still, his infernal habit of being always right. No one else was so deadly in cumulative citation and interpretation. But as a pleader, a forensic speaker, Mr. Webster could make hash of him. Now he was dead and there was no way of being even with him. Oh, to have gotten him alone in a room sometime, locked the door, and given him his choice between public apology and a thrashing! Such a bad taste endured in the live man's mouth from this encounter with the double of the dead, that he had to have a drink to wash it out, as soon as he reached the mess. He was not alone in this. Everybody except a few temperance advocates had drinks at

mid-day, as well as in the evening and (usually) in the morning.

The mess was in a boarding house just off the Avenue. For ten dollars a week, one got three abounding meals a day with a constantly replenished private decanter of liquor. The Massachusetts Congressman was a guest. At his table were Lowndes, Tyler, Rhea, Willie P. Mangum, Forsyth, Ingersoll, McLean and a dozen more. The talk was not all of politics. There was discussion of the projected railroad from Baltimore to Washington, on which cars were to be drawn by swift horses. One gentleman had heard that the horses were to be in the car and propel it by an ingenious application of the treadmill principle. Another understood that steam was to be attempted, a modification of Mr. Fulton's fire-boiler-steamboat. A diner from Pennsylvania snorted and said that the steamboat was no invention of Mr. Fulton's or Mr. Livingston's, either; that they were no better than thieves of other men's merits; that he had seen with his own eyes, before Mr. Fulton had burned his fingers with his first experiment, Mr. Fitch's steamboat plying the Schuylkill River beneath an attendant pillar of cloud and flame, while elderly cits fell upon their faces and cried upon their God to preserve them from all manner of witchcraft. From this the talk turned upon Mr. Webster's legal victory over Messrs. Fulton and Livingston, and for a time he

basked in compliments upon this and upon his glorious finale in the Dartmouth case and his great oration at Plymouth. Mr. Mangum offered to recite the adjuration, beginning, "It is, sir, a small college," but was dissuaded by the proffer of a full glass in which he drank a toast to "the most surpassing of all orators."

The firmament of American letters, remarked the scholarly Mr. Tyler, was bright with rising stars. Had any of them heard of young Mr. Washington Irving?

"I am proud to claim him as a fellow practitioner of literature, sir," said a youngish man with a high forehead, tossing hair, and a manner of conscious elegance.

"Who is that person?" inquired Webster of his neighbor in a low tone. "I am favorably impressed with his appearance."

"That is Mr. Richard Henry Wilde, poet and wit, now serving his State in Congress. I am surprised that you have not seen him on the floor."

"I am informed, sir," said Cheves to the younger man, "that New York is becoming quite a literary center. Are you acquainted with the literary endeavors of Mr. J. F. Cooper?"

"But slightly. I believe them to be by no means contemptible."

Cheves turned to Webster, who, as an orator, was naturally deemed to be an authority.

"I can boast no familiarity with either of the gentlemen named," said he, "though I am not wholly ignorant of the respectable versifications of Mr. W. C. Bryant."

Up popped Mr. Mangum, quoting patly from the author:

> "Homeward to Boston Webster comes to breathe.
> Jove-like the incense that from every nook
> Smokes up to his Olympus from beneath,
> With clerkly Everett, who his trade mistook."

The subject of Mr. Bryant's poesy bowed to applause.

"Not all the laurels fall to New York," he said. "I learn from my home journals that an American opera has been produced with applause in London."

"Do you refer to Mr. Payne's composition 'Clari, or the Maid of Milan'?" asked an elderly man.

"Yes, sir. Can you inform me as to its progress?"

"I have heard it criticized for frivolity of musical treatment. There is one pretty ditty in the score already transferred to our shores and much sung in the parlors of Beacon Hill. It is called 'Home, Sweet Home.'"

"Ephemera of a day," said Mr. Webster. "Only such great hymns as the compilations of the Reverends Hitt and Ware will survive from our day to preserve American music in honor."

"How are conditions of trade in your State, Mr. Buchanan?" the Pennsylvanian was asked.

"Improving, sir, improving."

"Thanks to the firm support of President Nicholas Biddle," put in Ingersoll.

"I have heard a witticism," said Mangum, "to this effect: 'The Government put Nicholas Biddle in charge of the Bank of the United States; now Nicholas Biddle is seeking to put the Bank in charge of the Government of the United States.'"

"A libel! A wicked libel!" cried Ingersoll and Buchanan in a breath.

"Mr. Biddle is a just and patriotic citizen," averred Mr. Webster, weightily. He could afford to defend his friend and ally. Nobody could prove any undue favors by the Bank to him. The *Albany Argus* had made such a charge and had been forced to retract it.

After the meal, which lasted from four to five, Mr. Webster debated his evening. Should he go home and polish up the periods of his speech on the bill for the relief of poor debtors? Or should he consult with other administration supporters over the strained situation in Georgia where the Federal Government was trying to conserve the rights of the Creek Indians, much to the disgust of the despoiling Georgians? Governor Troup had brusquely notified the President that he would send his military commander back to Washington in irons, if he ventured to address another

official communication to the State Government. To Mr. Webster this seemed a grave infraction of authority, looking to nullification and perhaps secession. He himself had come far from the day when he had advised the States to protect their own citizens against the usurpations of the War President, Madison. He was becoming more and more convinced of the necessity of a strong central Government. Of course, this present one, now threatened, was his kind of Government, with a good New Englander at the head of it; not a reckless opposition administration. This would always make a difference with Massachusetts-minded Mr. Webster.

The disposal of the succeeding hours was settled for him by the spectacle of Harry Clay and John Eaton bargaining on a corner with one of the rapacious hackmen who infested the streets. They hailed him; would he go up to the Franklin House with them for a round of drinks at the bar?

Mr. Webster knew the incentive. Peggy, daughter of Mine Host O'Neill, with her eyes of gray Irish laughter and her trick of nimble Irish wit, would sometimes mix special drinks for the great men who frequented the place more for the charm of her person than the quality of the liquor. She was reputed virtuous; there was a hazy marriage with a seafaring man in the background. Demure she certainly was, and singularly intelligent for one in her humble posi-

tion. Without ever putting questions, she found out early the kind of thing that later became important information. Statesmen, under the mellowing influence of an evening's libations, whispered to her in corners, and though she was competent in self-defense, she was a sympathetic listener. A conversation begun with amatory purpose often ended upon quite another note, for lovely Peggy knew more politics than many a windy Senator and was constantly adding to her information.

Certainly Mr. Webster would join the little expedition to distant Twenty-third Street. He liked Peggy, though he suspected her of being of the wrong party, since she was a friend of the wife of Andrew Jackson, who would be in the President's House at that very moment if Clay, Webster, and the Federalists had not engineered a pretty maneuver in the House and elected Adams over the man who had more votes. A good day's work for the Federalist party, and, of course, for the nation!

En route they picked up Hon. Willie P. Mangum in a condition more suitable for riding than for walking. Mr. Mangum desired to sing and he did sing. Statesmen often sang in the streets of the Capital at that period, and nobody minded. There was a bar to every ninety inhabitants—but that is perhaps irrelevant, incompetent, and immaterial.

Peggy attended them in the private apartment off

the saloon and compounded four mint jorums. Would she not drink one with them? She thanked the honorable gentlemen kindly; no. But she would gladly sit and talk with them.

"What is it, Peggy? You've got some morsel for us." For her eyes were dancing. They knew that symptom.

"You are acquainted with Mistress Ann Royall, the journalist-lady?" she asked.

"To my cost," said the Honorable Willie and writhed humorously.

"A wasp. A wicked wasp," said Mr. Clay.

"But well skilled in her profession," amended Mr. Webster, who had fared kindly at the hands of the enterprising freebooter. He knew how to cultivate useful journalists.

"There is," proceeded Peggy, "a certain gentleman of uncertain temper who lives in a large house which all of us know."

"Initials, J. Q. A.," grinned Mr. Clay.

"For good Mistress Royall he had conceived an aversion. She who counts all the great public men of the day among her subscribers could not even procure an interview, much less a subscription from this gentleman in high office. She learned that it was his habit, of a warm morning, to rise before the sun, repair to the Potomac, and there take his daily bath, for he is the most cleanly of Pres— of official gentlemen.

Accordingly, Mistress Royall, having sat up all night with her presses, also repaired to the river bank, but very privately. When the august body of the President— There, gentlemen, it's out of my mouth like a frog out of jug—was committed to the waters, she came out of the thicket and sat upon his clothes.

"He popped his head up from the surface. 'Woman! What do you want there?' 'I am awaiting a word with you, Mr. President.' 'Woman! Withdraw from my apparel.' She did not answer. The chill of the water entered into Mr. Adams's sluggish New England blood—asking your pardon, Mr. Webster. His teeth chattered. 'Wh-wh-what do you wish of me, Mrs. Royall?' 'No office: no favor for a friend. Merely an interview.' They made a composition. She returned to her thicket. He resumed the proper clothing of a Chief Magistrate. In the course of time we shall doubtless read the interview."

Clay and Eaton roared with laughter. "That merits another round-table of drinks."

"Not for Mr. Mangum," said Peggy firmly; "he has an important committee meeting to-morrow."

"Now how did you know that?" demanded the Honorable Willie, opening one eye.

"Our Peggy knows everything," declared Eaton.

"Give him his drink, anyway," said Clay. "Mangum would rather be drunk than be President."

"Wager I'll be President before you are, Harry Clay," retorted the brilliant drunkard. "Show you a letter." He drew out a sheaf of papers which scattered on the table. With an exclamation, Peggy O'Neill snatched up one of them, and thrust it back in his pocket. A stiff and elegantly embossed card caught Eaton's eye.

"Is that an invitation to the fête of the Orphan Asylum benefice?"

"I have one of those, also," said Clay, and Mr. Webster remembered that he had one and had engaged himself to attend.

It was to be the social event of the season, the grand march led by those fashionable leaders, Mrs. Bomfort and Mr. Pishey Thompson. Afterward there was to be a sale to the highest bidder of the original manuscript of Mrs. Margaret Smith's romance, "What Is Gentility?" dealing elegantly but unsparingly with high life in Washington. With dismay Mr. Webster recollected his promise to superintend the composition of a punch for the occasion.

"Let us make a party, say I, and escort Peggy," was the Honorable Mangum's luminous idea.

"Not I," declared the bar-maid. "I know my station."

Eaton scowled and said something under his breath. She gave him a swift, inscrutable look. Clay got to his feet.

"Mistress Margaret O'Neill, I will maintain against all argument and opposition that in wit, in intelligence, in decorum, and in beauty you would be the peer of any lady there present. And I make bold to prophesy that you will yet live to trouble the peace of many of those who hold themselves to be your betters."

The vinous prophecy was not far short of the truth. "Pothouse Peggy," as the stupid, pretentious and hateful cabal formed against her called her, was within a few years to convulse Washington socially, to disrupt a Cabinet, and to help make a courteous and impersonally attentive widower President of the United States. But to the Orphan's Fair she would not go.

Messrs. Clay and Webster drove home to dress. Willie P. Mangum was led upstairs to bed. Eaton stayed behind. He asked Peggy to marry him before he left.

Mr. Webster's arrival at the Fair was quite the event of the evening. Mr. Clay, already there, was the center of a gay and young circle. He was a more popular personality, but a less impressive figure. People were led forward, as to royalty, to meet the noted orator. He had a gracious and patronizing word for all lesser folk, but his attempts at good-fellowship with his peers were likely to be a bit heavy and conscious.

A committee escorted him to a side room to concoct

a bowl of the famous Daniel Webster Punch. This was an artful blend of Medford rum, brandy, champagne, arrack and maraschino, upon a base of strong green tea laced with lemon. It was a tasty, authoritative and popular mixture and added notably, sold by the beaker, to the receipts as well as to the gayety of the evening. Afterward, Mr. Webster played whist. His was a thoughtful, conservative and, as one might say, Constitutional type of game. It lost him some money.

Home at his lonesome lodgings, he saw a bundle of papers laid out neatly on his desk by his servant. He had forgotten that it was the second of the month. Bills, always bills! His stove stood close by, its top suggestively open. He tossed the whole unsightly bunch in and clapped on the lid.

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT MAN AT HOME

THE Websters were now rich folk. Fifteen thousand a year was a magnificent income for the period, and Daniel Webster's law practice exceeded that in good years. He had a house in Boston, the country place of his earlier dreams at Marshfield; the paternal farm at Franklin; stocks in several rainbow-hued ventures; horses, cattle, boats, guns, a wine cellar, clothes in profusion, everything that a rich man could expect or desire, except money. He never seemed to have any cash. In lieu of it he devised an intricate and successful system of maintenance by means of borrowing on notes and paying the loans with other notes, eked out with an occasional draft or check on a bank where he might or might not have funds. The disagreeable term, "kiting," had not yet been invented.

In a long record of dire error, Marshfield is the one good investment to Webster's credit. It began as a modest homestead of one hundred and sixty acres, overlooking the ocean some twenty-five miles south of Boston, threaded by a cool, trout-haunted stream, offering sanctuary in the salt-swampy fields to duck, snipe and plover, and, in its pigmy woods, to quail and

grouse. It was within earshot of the "rut of the sea" which he loved, that deep, slow heart-beat of the ocean's subsidence after storm, "too full for sound or foam," the rhythm of the pulse of a hidden world. Here Webster realized his ambition to be a country squire, benevolently lording it over broad and fertile acres. He could delightedly vaunt himself to be "the first farmer of Marshfield South Parish," and prefer that honor to the Vice-Presidency of the United States.

"The city for profit, the country for pleasure." In the coming years of crushing responsibility, of growing and unsatisfied ambitions, of the ceaseless erosion of debt and loss, the place on the shore was refuge and restoration. *Thalassa! Thalassa!* "Marshfield and the sea, the sea!" is the cry of his heart. When the labors of state, and the burden of official life became too heavy, he would leave Washington, ostensibly to consult his constituency on weighty matters, but in reality "to go down to Marshfield and catch one trout with Seth Weston." He had a passion for his shore acres deeper and more genuine than either success or woman ever roused in his soul.

From a simple homestead, the holding grew to the proportions of a gentleman's estate, as he added to it on the three available sides by purchase, by lease, by mortgage. Eventually it became a demesne of two thousand acres, with pure-bred cattle, pedigreed sheep,

pigs, oxen, wild Canada geese, horses, fine poultry, two yachts and (why or how I have not discovered) a herd of llamas. It helped to keep him in debt; he had to rake and scrape when his affairs were at their most desperate, to pay the upkeep, but it was richly worth it for what it returned him in health and happiness.

In the early days of his mounting law practice, it was his first refuge. When an April wind bore the scent of young leafage through Boston's crooked streets, clients of a certain rising counselor might content themselves with the sight of a placard on the door, while a deep-chested, dome-browed truant in correct sporting costume crept artfully along some willow-fringed brook in quest of those trout whose interests he had successfully promoted through his first and only bill in the State Legislature. (Serving an uncompleted ten-day term, he secured the passage of a law prohibiting the taking of brook trout otherwise than with hook and line.) These were clients whom he never neglected.

Here at Marshfield he was at his best and happiest, a giant released from the bonds of his own greatness. If the truth must be known, he was a bit of a roughneck, too, this Farmer Webster of Marshfield, who on his return to a duller life was Senator Webster or Secretary of State Webster. Up at four-thirty in the morning he would prance, bellowing, down the stairs,

waking family and guests with the strain of some favorite Sternhold & Hopkins hymn, all on one basso note. Out to the stables, where he would feed his oxen with an ear of corn apiece, rub the noses of his favorite horses, inspect his fancy cattle, eat an apple or a raw turnip, and return to the house with mischief in his soul. No hymnal music signalized his return. Quietly he would creep upstairs. The guest who was an intimate of the household, such as Peter Harvey or Lawyer Blake, would find himself stripped suddenly of bed-clothing and defenseless to the crisp air, while a ribald statesman jeered him from the doorway.

Breakfast was a boisterous feast. The host would tell stories, improvise jokes, denounce his family and guests as lagabeds, eat enormously, pause in the midst of a dish to recite some doggerel—always of a singular and jingling felicity of meter, for his ear was as accurate in rhythm as it was deficient in tone sense—at the expense of any one present, and break off to burst into stentorian and tuneless song. "If there is one thing I do understand above all others, it is music," he would declare solemnly. Or, if a late arrival appeared, he would seize upon the unfortunate's name and decline it in the manner of a Latin noun—"Weston—Westonis—Westoni—Westonem" and so on. Once started upon this linguistic track, he was likely to deviate into a hideous jargon of hog-Latin, bastard

Greek, fragmentary French and strings of local Yankee idiom. The meal was often monologous; it was never monotonous.

Always he took with him on his rustic flights a sop to conscience, in the form of the hated green bag stuffed with legal papers. If the weather was too bad, so much the better for his clients. He settled in the library and got through a bulk of work in a day which would have required a week in one less capable of terrific concentration. But if the fish were biting or the birds rising, good-by to duty. With his "umbrella" (Websterian for gun) he would be off to the moors; or with his heavy rod he and one of the local Seths, Weston or Peterson, would up-sail and set a course for the ledge where the tautog lay. In the evening there would be punch and stories and much good talk, mostly by the host because the others would rather listen to his vivid narrative, sometimes oracular, sometimes homely, than hear their own lesser voices. Sometimes there was a beach party with Webster superintending the cooking. The comic weeklies good-humoredly dubbed him "Thane of Chowder."

The country folk adored him. Tacit understanding kept them silent on politics; their great man was there to rest. They debated, discussed and even disputed moot question of soil, crops and stock. He gave them free advice about their affairs and secret help in their difficulties. They fished, hunted, and rode together.

Believe it or not, he and Seth Weston saw the sea-serpent.

It was to Marshfield that he went back at the last, for the only healing left to his broken, disillusioned, but unsoured spirit. The smell of its woods was in his nostrils and the beat of the sea on the beach in his ears when he died.

If he was a local godling to the rustics after his settlement in Marshfield, he was hardly less so in Boston. People pointed him out in the streets as the orator who had made notable three great occasions. His Plymouth Anniversary discourse had set him on the summit; higher he could not rise, either by the grandiose exuberances of the first Bunker Hill oration, or the soberer but still richly ornamental eulogy on Adams and Jefferson, both dead with singular historical appositeness on the same Fourth of July. For the curious in oratorical fashions, the Bunker Hill oration is worth study. It is, of course, turgid, bombastic, elaborate, artificial; Webster was seldom anything else when he rose with hand tucked in below his coat lapel, to address a waiting audience. Equally, of course, it was an enormous success. The public appetite for overstuffed vocality was insatiable. Read in the preserved print of another century, the address seems, with the exception of a few fine and impressive passages, "a great deal of solemn commonplace," to employ a Websterian phrase. In particular, the fervid

CONCERT PITCH—THE REPLY TO HAYNE

From the painting by G. P. A. Healy in Faneuil Hall, Boston, Mass.

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apostrophe to the Revolutionary veterans, as preserved in school readers, is calculated to inspire the critical with wonder and the ribald with mirth. But ours is a verbally unimpressionable age. Moreover, in type, the matter lacks the irradiation of that superb and glamorous personality which carried everything before it.

Be it remembered that we Americans have always worshiped the golden calf of physical magnetism. The hysterical adulation of to-day's celebrity, whether a Babe Ruth, a Jack Dempsey, a Ronald Colman, an Aimee McPherson or a Clara Bow, is not essentially different from the incense-burning of our forefathers. It may even be claimed in behalf of an earlier generation that the mental athlete is at least as worthy an object of respect as the home run batter or the heavyweight pugilist. In his day the godlike Daniel had no peer for sheer fascination. With those luminous, wonderful, secret eyes, shooting flame from beneath the bulky brow, the "lion's mouth that could smile as softly as a woman's," the perfect control and management of facial expression, and that splendid resonant delivery operated with the virtuosity of a great artist, he could at will not only enrapture but also enslave the minds of his hearers, making the worse part seem the better, and black to shine like white.

Law-courts, Congressional galleries, and mass meetings dissolved in tears at the catalytic precipitation of

his eloquence; the worshipful Everett testifies that he felt his temples bursting with emotional flush of his blood. Lesser men gasped, wept, and panted like converts at a revival. One cannot quite escape the conviction that they were, to employ a term from the prize ring, "easy bleeders" in those days.

There is no question, however, but that Webster exercised a sway over his audiences such as no other man of his time possessed. His voice seems to have had a quality of mass-seduction as potent over men as Rudy Vallée's over women, although, to be sure, he did not croon.

Of his three early orations, the most interesting survival is a famous historical deception. Nine people out of ten believe that the famous phrase "Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish" was uttered by John Adams in the meeting which signed the Declaration of Independence. It was not. It was uttered by Daniel Webster and put into the mouth of John Adams, in an admirably imaginative and ingenious word-picture of that scene, though in slightly different form, the "sink or swim" clause being absent from the Webster original, and having been supplied by some later editor with an ear for rhythmic balance. This is not the only instance wherein famous words of the famous orator have been improved by amendment.

Data of the Websters' social life in the Boston

of the Twenties are scanty. That they went, when they did go, among the best people is apparent. But the godlike one had no great taste for the frivolities of social intercourse. He preferred the company of men to that of women, broadly speaking. He frequented the Coffee Exchange in Cambridge which was the nearest local approach to a representative club, and his bills there for drink are generous and various but not scandalous. He had been a fairly steady drinker, with one unexplained lapse, since he was seventeen, but it was an age of steady and even heavy drinking. At this period he was not overindulging in liquor. He probably was, in food.

To the good opinion of the solid men of Boston he was commending himself more strongly all the time. They may have looked askance at his moral indignation against the slave trade; slavery was a vested interest, and as such entitled to the respect and support of all good citizens. And they may have smiled at his fervor about the Constitution, the mere reading of which he declared brought tears to his eyes. It brought only an expression of dubiety to theirs. It embodied a system which was far from satisfactory in too many respects. The wrong men got into office. Respect for property was waning. The whole idea of democratic government was dangerous; it might even have been better if we had never split with England, after a proper and necessary assertion of our rights.

The Best Minds of Boston were largely Tory, and English Tory at that.

Respect for property was one point upon which Daniel Webster was sound. In the State Constitutional Convention he had stood out to the last for a Senatorial property qualification. He had stated unequivocally that "the great object of government is the protection of property at home and respect and renown abroad." What could be sounder than that! It was a pity that he had been so violent a free-trader; but after all, who could blame him? They had all been violent free-traders in New England. Now their factories represented a heavier investment and a greater earning power than their shipping. Naturally, they needed protection for their products. New England's interests had changed, and she could depend upon her favorite son to change with them. Already he had shown evidences of his goodwill and adaptability. That old free-trade speech of his was a powerful argument. Regrettable. It would be hard to refute. Well, if anybody could refute Daniel Webster, Daniel Webster was the man to do it. But they must keep him in Congress. That itch of his for going to London as Minister was all folderol. The Senate, perhaps; but Washington, where he could be useful, at all costs.

In 1828 his domestic life fell apart. Death had already struck harshly at the family, taking first his

daughter, Grace, and then his infant son, Charles. Now the once buoyant country girl, subdued into the gentle and adoring wife, died after an illness of long agony. During this time Webster was devotion itself. His letters, the letters of an emotionally inexpressive man, pluck at the heart. He genuinely mourned her. But, as regards any influence upon his life and career, her passing out from it was of as little effect as her entry into it, and when he presently replaced her it was with a successor of a very different and more sophisticated type.

Having attained his middle forties, Webster began to make plans for posterity. Not only did he write for one lady that ornate and insignificant "Autobiography" to which sufficient reference has been made, but he also sat for his portrait to another lady. He sat to her for five portraits in all.

The artist was a young miniature painter, Miss Sarah Goodridge, a favorite pupil of the great Gilbert Stuart, with a glowing and delicate quality in her work. Of her, little is known but the indirect reflection of a slender sheaf of letters from the great man, broken by the long interstices of the years, and covering two decades. Unhappily her replies were lost or, not improbably, destroyed by the recipient. The miniature portrait now in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society together with the letters (unpublished), gives us not the familiar deep-domed

statesman with hand forensically disposed in a swelling coat-front, but a sensitive, beautiful, and poetic conception of a character vital with charm, tenderness and whimsicality. There is a touch of the light that never was on land or sea in this interpretation, startlingly different from the posing-for-his-picture presentments of more noted and less happy productions. Too many of the Webster portraits make one think of a bullfrog immersed in the gloom of deep thought. Sarah Goodridge's suggest a faun in sunlight.

Through the broken and fragmentary data of the one-sided correspondence, the story of their association develops. He finds a studio for her. He sits for her there. Sometimes she comes to his office. He looks after rooms for her. The letters begin with the usual formality "Madam," but presently assume the more personal phase of "Dear Madam," then "Dear Miss G." and finally "My dear, good friend," which is an unexampled outburst of warmth, so far as I am aware, on the part of a man who habitually addressed his intimates as "Dear Sir" or at most "My dear Sir," and employed the latter formula at times even with his much loved brother.

Within two years of their meeting, he married again, but this did not terminate, though it may have interrupted, their relationship. Five years later he is writing her:

"It always gives me pleasure to hear from you and to learn your health and happiness. So that when you have nothing to write, as well as when you have something, your letters will be welcomed."

Evidently she confided in him her professional troubles and triumphs. Some client paid her a considerable sum, on a commission. She tells her distinguished friend of it. Alas for the ingenuousness of the artistic temperament! Romantic the godlike Daniel might be; he was always practical. He replies, congratulating her upon the payment from "your country friend"—and could she let him have five hundred dollars for a brief period? The poor little lady could and did.

"In due time I will have the note sent you," he promised.

Thereafter his correspondence becomes a dreary succession of excuses and postponements; hers must have developed into a mounting urgency. Her request, he regrets to say, is "not quite convenient." Next week he will see what can be done. After a year or two he does make a part payment, undertaking to clear up the remainder within a month. But he never did clear himself in full; indeed, he seems to have incurred a further liability to her after his payments on account, though this was probably not a loan but

an order for more miniatures of himself or his family. Mostly his letters sound the apologetic and promissory note.

"I am very poor to-day but I will let you have some money—a little—in the early part of next week."

And again, "Will not fail to call and see you," he assures her, pleading ill-health as excuse for his neglect. Within two years of his death he is apologizing for remissness. The debt was twenty years old.

> "I ought to have written you long ago, but various things have prevented—among others the want of anything valuable to enclose."

What became of the little artist's hard-earned five hundred dollars, that drop in the bucket of Webster's gargantuan borrowings? Did it go to make good some check for which there were no funds in bank? Or to insure, in an emergency call for financial satisfaction, that the debtor's name "be not found wanting," the well-founded dread which haunted his days? Or to the timbered wilds of some cataract-bordering section of Michigan or Wisconsin? Or down to his adored Marshfield to help add another hundred acres of meadowland or to purchase a prize bull? It will never be known.

For the reader whose interest is sentimental rather

than financial, it may be recorded that Sarah Goodridge never married. "Whom the seraph's wing hath brushed . . ."? Perhaps. There is a faint rose-leaf exhalation from those ancient missives, not wholly pecuniary or professional.

CHAPTER XI

AN UNFOUGHT DUEL

MASSACHUSETTS, having set Webster upon a pedestal, now added a cubit to his political stature by electing him to the Senate. He was no longer needed in the House where Adams had kept him to lead the administration forces. Jackson had overwhelmed Adams in his attempt at reëlection, and that high-minded and patriotic crosspatch had passed as a figure of the first magnitude, packing with him from the President's House his undiminished sense of service, his New England conscience (one of the best of its kind) and his diary written in composite ink and vitriol. He was henceforth to find his *métier* as a valuable, dignified, industrious and troublesome member of the House of Representatives, providing an example, not since followed, of how an ex-President may be put to practical use.

As Webster entered the Senate, his unappeased foe, Randolph of Roanoke, was about to retire from it, having for a term wasted its time with his scintillant irrelevancies, now to be transferred to the House. There he was to resume his rôle of dangerous and tragico-absurd clown, with his horse hitched outside,

his hound couched beneath his desk, his cavalier appurtenances of whip, spurs, and riding gloves, and his interlocutory pipings for "Porter, Timms," wherewith to lubricate a voice which too often monopolized the session.

The withered, shrill-voiced, beardless homunculus, with the physique of a spindling boy, the classicism of a pundit, the intellect of a malverted genius, the pride and integrity of an aristocrat, the flatulent egotism of a spoiled child, the temper of a rattlesnake, and the vanity and courage of a gamecock, was growing more virulent with the passing of the years. Nobody was exempt from his vituperation. He called Adams a traitor, Holmes a dangerous fool, Webster a vile slanderer, Clay a forger, and Livingston unfit to touch without tongs. Now out of the past he called up the old feud with the Massachusetts man who was antipathetic to him in every way. The whole protracted course of the unfought duel between the two is one of the most curious episodes in the career of either.

Back in 1816 there had been a challenge issued by Randolph, but instantly withdrawn. Eight years later the two served on a House committee appointed to investigate baseless charges against Secretary of the Treasury Crawford. The findings were unanimous. Nevertheless Randolph, upon his return from a European trip and probably in one of his recurrent phases

of semi-insanity, accused his associates of bad faith. They replied, giving him the lie, in more or less parliamentary terms—some more, some less. Although Webster's statement was distinctly less offensive than that of at least one of his colleagues, the rampageous Virginian chose him as the one to be called to account. It seems to be a case of the fanning of an old fire of unslaked wrath. In a statement to his literary valet, Peter Harvey, that most gushing and gullible of biographers, Webster boasted:

> "I told him that I did not choose to be called to account for anything that I had said, and that I meant just what I had said."

Query: if this were true, why did not a fight result? That Randolph backed down as Webster's eulogists suppose is quite incompatible with any reasonable estimate of his character. What actually occurred came to light more than half a century later, through the appearance of a series of formal notes made out by Benton of Missouri, a bit of a fire-eater himself, who acted as Randolph's emissary and presumably expected to act as his second. Some sort of agreement of secrecy was signed after the challenged man had satisfied his opponent's sense of injured honor, which he did in the following memorandum, agreed to by both parties. W. is Webster, B., Benton, R., Randolph.

"Mr. W. is now willing that Mr. B. should say to Mr. R. that he has no recollections of having said anything which can possibly be considered as affecting Mr. R.'s veracity, beyond what he said in the H.R. If he has used other expressions they must have been at about the same time, and of the same import. He does not now recollect them, and disclaims all of a different import.

"As to what Mr. W. said in the House, he meant only to state that Mr. R. was under an entire mistake, or misapprehension as to the facts. He meant to say nothing more; and neither intends to make nor did make any imputations on the personal veracity of Mr. R."

There may be some fine, impalpable line between personal and official veracity. In any case, this pacific response is in marked contrast to the *bravura* tone of the retort which Webster reported to Harvey, and better explains the lapse of the challenge which followed, after some obscure covenant that neither should publish anything about the matter.

The sight of the object of his former lethal intent in the Senate several years later seems to have rasped open the ancient scar. Randolph, among his Washington associates, muttered reflections upon the Yankee's courage and finally branded him, at a public meeting in Virginia, as a proven coward. Webster

did not reply, directly. Whether or not he replied indirectly through the press, as he occasionally found it convenient to do, is uncertain. The *New York Commercial Advertiser* published a fiery article calling Randolph "this corrupt and crazy orator" and giving an account of the old quarrel so injurious to the Virginian that again he challenged Webster; but this time he challenged him only to put the convention of earlier days into operation. Webster replied suggesting the abrogation of the whole agreement, which did not suit the other's plan at all. Despairing of any action, Randolph gave up, and contented himself with black looks.

It is all quite mysterious, or would be but for the abnormal physique of the aggressor, which lends color to the story of an underlying cause of offense, never, as far as I know, preserved in print, but still current in Washington and Virginia. If true—and it at least bears the mark of verisimilitude—it would explain the long cherished rancor of the abnormal and sensitive egotist.

Randolph's beardless chin and falsetto voice were the outward and visible signs of a permanent and humiliating deficiency. An illness contracted at the susceptible age of thirteen had left him in a state which, in the words of a malignant (and immediately fugitive) adversary, rendered him "an object of pity to men and contempt to women." Some reference in

the course of an early Congressional speech of Webster's was interpreted by the super-sensitive Virginian as a sneer at his misfortune. This was certainly a misconception; the New Englander was far too magnanimous in debate thus to have hit below the belt.

Randolph's *riposte* was as much of a classic as might have been expected from the most brilliant and dangerous mind of the day.

> "As for what he has chosen to say reflecting upon certain supposititious personal disabilities of my own, I have only to state that I would not attempt to vie with the honorable gentleman from Massachusetts in a field wherein every nigger is his peer and every billy-goat his master."

A retort perfect enough one might suppose to have satisfied the artistry and so the resentment of the speaker. The instant withdrawal of the first challenge would seem to indicate a conviction of error. But suspicion, once aroused in an unbalanced mind, leaves its poison like a toxin in the blood. It may well have been this re-imagined and unforgivable insult which inspired the later outbreak, though the real cause was masked.

It is pleasant to record that the Randolphian taste for gunpowder did not always go unappeased. So lively was his abuse of Clay that it forced that reluc-

tant, though unafraid, statesman to a challenge. It might have ended in the worst of catastrophes for the Virginian; he accidentally fired before the word, and fortunately missed. Clay, at the proper time, shot him through the coat-tail, while the other carefully aimed his own shot at the zenith. Observing this, Clay threw away his pistol and ran forward with outstretched hand.

"Mr. Clay, you owe me a new coat," said his adversary severely.

For years after, the strange being went about darkly saying: "Henry Clay is a brave man—I have tested him—though his friend, Daniel Webster, is a poltroon, and I have the evidence of it in my pocket."

Daniel Webster was not a poltroon. He never lacked physical courage. But he considered dueling a form of senseless barbarism, and blamed Clay for letting himself be badgered into it. Moreover, being a sensible person, he could presumably see neither pleasure nor profit in standing up to be shot at by an unhappy specter to whom death would be as welcome as life. Who could?

Nevertheless the episode rankled. He felt, or suspected, contemptuous looks, especially from the fire-eating Southerners. It is a fact that he was regarded as timid by many of his political associates of that and later days, but they seemed to have had in mind moral rather than physical vacillation, and it is

doubtful how much effect upon his reputation the aspersions of Randolph may have had. But I am inclined to attribute to this cause a remarkable romance of his own valor and dominance, related to the receptive Harvey. The period is about the time of the Randolph challenge; the personages, the rising young Webster and the supercilious William Pinkney, leader of the American bar.

According to this tale, Pinkney had snubbed the younger man because he would not join his satellites and divide fees. This culminated in a deliberate slur inflicted in the Supreme Court. After adjournment Webster accosted Pinkney in the lobby, led him to a grand jury room and locked the door.

"You must ask my pardon and apologize in court, or else either you or I will go out of this room in a different condition from that in which we entered it."

Pinkney began to falter, but was cut short. "No explanations. Admit the fact and take it back. You must apologize or take what I give you."

The great lawyer (in the Webster-Harvey account) "trembled like a leaf." Said he: "You are right. I am sorry. I did intend to bluff you. I regret it and ask your pardon." And he later apologized in court.

The whole narrative is, of course, a tissue of absurdity. One is tempted sometimes to suspect that not only was a great actor, as Mason declared, lost in Daniel Webster, but also a great romancer. In Har-

vey he found a receptive audience, and this is not the only instance wherein he sought relief from the injurious opinion of others in the adoring credulity of his biographer.

A cold-blooded murder of one Congressman by another, under guise of the code of honor, deprived dueling of its respectability, if not of its aristocracy, in Washington. Webster's voice was one of those lifted against the barbarism.

CHAPTER XII

AMONG THE GIANTS

THE Senate to which Webster brought his eloquence, his ambitions, and his unreliable talent for political strategy, was an arena of champions in the years of his first service. Calhoun was presiding. Below him were such men as the suave and swift-witted Van Buren whose pleasantly peering eyes missed nothing. Benton, first and doughty protagonist for the pioneer West, Hayne, the oratorical ace of the South, Clay, Tyler, Forsyth, Grundy, Ewing, Ike Hill of New Hampshire, Webster's journalistic tormentor, whose enemies claimed that he was a descendant of the hanged witches of Salem (they neglected to specify of how many) and the heritor of all their least amiable qualities; the oracular Hugh White, the brilliant but erratic Poindexter, the fire-breathing Eaton, and the conscientious bore, Foote.

That the new member from Massachusetts became at once a notable figure in such a body, is sufficient evidence of the prestige which he had brought with him from the lower house.

Congress was the directorate and President Andrew Jackson the executive head of an extremely busy, pros-

perous and rapidly expanding corporation, the United States of America, with more business on its hands than it quite knew how to manage. The subsidiary units, the States, were diverse in tastes, creeds, and interests. They were split into overlapping, interweaving factions on the tariff, finance, States' rights, Masonry, and the extension of slavery. The Chairman of the Board distrusted a majority of the directors and suspected that his Vice-President was disloyal to him and to the corporation. In return, he was cordially and widely hated, and slavishly and broadly adored. Many of the stockholders would have liked to shoot him. One did. But he was hard to kill, as was the organization which he ran. In such conditions any private concern would have gone on the rocks a hundred times. But there inhered in this strange complex of loyalties, rivalries, and hostilities an intense vitality and an evangelical lust to prove to the world what America could do, that brought it through safely.

Webster, or any other statesman, would have to do some expert steering to bring his craft of precious ambitions through these shoals and rapids, to the haven of the Presidency.

He remarried in 1829. His bride was Caroline Le Roy, daughter of a mercantile family of social position in New York. His pre-nuptial description of her as "amiable, discreet, prudent, with enough of personal

comeliness to satisfy me, and of the most excellent character and principles" is perhaps more judicial than lover-like, but our man is now forty-seven years old, and past the time of excessive ardors. Others found her beautiful. He found her useful, since she added to his social prestige, and he was able to (and naturally did) borrow money of her family. She was a dignified though never a conspicuous figure in Washington, and spent much time away.

Senator Webster had not only a new wife, but more important and significant, a new costume. It was the brass-buttoned buff-and-blue of the Continental uniform—he borrowed the notion from Charles James Fox, who used to don the regalia whenever he spoke in Parliament supporting the American colonies—and typified the wearer's now solidified nationalistic convictions. "That bright blue coat and particularly buff waistcoat which are so ominous of an explosion which kills always somebody," as Seward later described it, signalized any occasion when Webster intended to be particularly emphatic in his enunciation of one hundred per cent Americanism. Twenty, even fifteen, years before, if there had been such a thing as a Massachusetts uniform, he would have been wearing that for his special appearances.

He had already made a determined attempt to purge his reputation of the extreme sectionalism which had found expression in the anti-war and nullificationist

doctrines of his early legislative days. Theodore Lyman, of Boston, had made a savage attack in his Boston newspaper upon the participants in the "treasonable" Hartford Convention. He was really gunning for John Quincy Adams, whom he hated, but he flushed Daniel Webster, whom he liked, and who promptly sued him for libel. Webster's biographical eulogists regret this appeal to law as an error, since it resulted in defeat, through a hung jury. But it seems to have been sound strategy. It served notice that Daniel Webster, nationalist, Constitutionalist, and patriot was ready to fight any who attempted to connect him with the States' rights heresies of the past. Lyman was merely a straw man. He and Webster resumed their friendship. Under this standard the buff-and-blue Senator was prepared and expected to fight President Jackson. It was not the only mistake that he made in his estimate of "Old Hickory." He started with a ludicrously erroneous one.

> "My private opinion is that General J. has not character enough to conduct his measures by his own strength. Somebody must and will lead him."

Nobody could lead Andrew Jackson. He and Webster were to march, pace and pace, in the advance which established permanently the essential indivisibility of the Union. In all other respects they were

inimical as by predestination of character, the adventurous Democrat and the case-hardened Federalist.

Politicians of the period had their main course conveniently charted for them. A man was either a Jacksonian or an anti-Jacksonian. "There are but two parties in the Union; that of the Administration and the opposition," said Clay.

Principle, prejudice and self-interest all committed Webster to the Opposition. The National Republican party, successor to the old Federalists, had no other unifying principle than hatred of Old Hickory. Webster believed that he could not be reëlected, and that Clay would succeed to the Presidency. "Keep New England firm and steady and she can make him President if she chooses," he wrote to Brother Zeke. After that it would be his own turn.

His great concern now was the United States Bank fight against the President. In the cause of Emperor Nick Biddle and his "Monster" he expended more parliamentary energy, strategy, and language than upon any other single issue in his career. For a time, when Clay had left the Senate to foster his Presidential candidacy, Webster logically fell heir to the leadership of the anti-Jackson forces. But the orator proved an unprofitable chieftain. He lacked the associative magnetism, the knack of intimate persuasion and coercion, necessary to control. Recognizing this, he frankly appealed to the rusticating Kentuck-

ian to return and afford "your aid or rather your lead."

A trouble had long been brewing in the South in which he needed no man's lead, least of all, Clay's. South Carolina was in a ferment over the tariff. She was fulminating nullification and plotting secession. An issue which he could make peculiarly his own, which the country would identify as individually his, was what Webster most needed to give his career a broad national basis and significance. He awaited the occasion, and when it did not come, he ingeniously twisted an issue to afford his opportunity.

A resolution of secondary importance had been introduced by Senator Foote dealing with the sale of public lands, a subject much to the fore in the Twenties and Thirties. Opposing it, General Hayne of South Carolina, ably attacked New England for jealous hostility to the development of the South and West. Webster's first reply was equally sectional and partisan. But the actor, eagerly hopeful of the cue for his great speech, set a trap for his opponent. The trap was Nullification. Hayne fell into it; he devoted a large part of his second effort to this topic.

Having, so to speak, feinted his foe into this position, Webster got into his blue coat and buff vest and delivered his heavy blow. The famous "Reply to Hayne" is not, in reality, much of a reply to Hayne; certainly it was not, except in minor detail, pertinent

to the question under discussion. It was a rotund and splendid assertion, in the heaviest Websterian manner, of the principle which, in future, the Great Upholder was to inscribe on his banner beside the legend "Constitution."

It did not, as New England fondly believed, "crush nullification," nor did it, as Webster himself prematurely boasted, "grind Haynes as fine as a pinch of snuff." Many thought that the Southerner had the better of it, and stood by their judgment when the two speeches were printed and circulated together. But this it did; it gave a slogan to those for whom the Federal Union was a sacred thing. It identified secession with treason. What had been only a dispute between North and South was now a clear-cut issue between loyalty and disloyalty. "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable," is Daniel Webster's first and incalculably important service to the United States of America as a single entity.

Every American who has attended a public school knows the sonorous oration. To the student of the *Ars Rhetorica* which Webster studied and practiced, it is more interesting in its original than in its edited-for-publication form, because of the spoken version's boldly centripetal personification; its lavish employment of the first person singular. The I's flash through the majestic roll of the words, like lightning through a storm. They are not an evidence of forensic

vanity. They are art. The orator was consciously capitalizing his irresistible personal splendor, the seduction of his beauty, the magic of his direct, individual appeal.

> "When my eyes shall be turned for the last time on the meridian sun, I hope I may see him shining bright upon my united, free and happy country. I hope I shall not live to see his beams falling upon the dispersed fragments of the structure of this glorious Union. I hope I may not see the flag of my country with its stars separated or obliterated; torn by commotions; smoking with the blood of civil war. I hope I may not see the standard raised of separate States' rights, star against star and stripe against stripe, but that the flag of this Union may keep its stripes, corded and bound together in indissoluble ties. I hope I shall not see written as its motto, first Liberty and then Union. I hope I shall see no such delusive and deluded motto on the flag of that country. I hope to see, spread all over it, blazoned in letters of light and proudly floating over land and sea, that other sentiment dear to my heart, Union *and* Liberty, now and forever, one and inseparable."

What the speaker had actually done was to invite his hearers to behold in him the spirit and embodiment

of American unity and then to say whether so magnificent an entity should be wantonly destroyed.

One of his most effective periods, that in which he declared that there can be no such thing as treason made easy, is lacking in the pamphlet form which circulated throughout the country, because an obtuse printer insisted upon rendering it "treason madcosy" and stuck to that meaningless form despite the corrections of the author who finally gave it up in disgust. For some strange reason, he never ranked this as among the best of his speeches.

The nation did and instantaneously. He was hailed as the prophet, the out-speaker of a re-born and vigorous nationalism. From coast to far and mighty river he was hailed as the Great Expounder, the Illustrious Defender, the Massachusetts Thunderer, the Pillar of the Constitution, the Eagle of the East, the Immortal Webster, the Godlike Daniel, the Black Giant, the Great Stone Face. Theodore Parker, that militant Abolitionist divine who wrote his sermons with a fugitive slave in his cellar and a naked weapon in his desk, said sneeringly that Webster regarded himself as one of the institutions of his country. Why not? He was.

Because Andrew Jackson was a Southerner, Webster had at first assumed that he would go with his section and connive at, if not actually support, Nullification. Another of those errors of character-reading

which were a weakness in the orator's political equipment. The hard metal of the warrior struck fire from the impact of the challenge to the South, and there was a clear echo of it at that Belshazzar-feast of the Jefferson celebration when, amidst the consternation of his supporters who had urged against so perilously provocative a course, he gave the toast, "Our Federal Union; it must and shall be preserved," staring with deadly intentness at Vice-President Calhoun, who perforce drank, though the wine spilled from his shaking glass and stained the cloth below like a portent of future blood.

Thereafter, though they were diametrically opposed, though Jackson was sometimes bitter and Webster sometimes petty, neither could quite divest himself of a remnant liking and respect for the other. One evening there was a casual triple meeting in the President's House—Jackson, Webster, Van Buren—at which the three, inspired by what noble sentiments will never be known, sang an impromptu trio. Musically it must have been an extraordinary performance. When he finally stalked forth, on his long staff with its multicolored streamers, from an incumbency of eight years' steady warfare, the old Indian fighter sighed regretfully because he had not shot Clay and hanged Calhoun. For Webster he had no harsh word.

That Jackson would be renominated for a second term was a foregone conclusion, and Clay was his

predestined opponent. Webster loyally supported "Harry of the West" and thought his chances favorable. They were actually nil. Brandishing the symbolic hickory bough and chanting their battlesong with its astonishing quadruple inner-rhyme,

> "It shall wave o'er the grave of the Tory and knave
> And shelter the brave and the free,"

the Democrats overwhelmed their opponents. With the Kentuckian eliminated, the favorite son of New England now saw himself as the logical nominee of the party four years thence.

But what a party! It was perhaps the most impotent and amorphous major political hodge-podge on record. Based upon the routed army of National Republicans, it included Masons and anti-Masons, believers in high tariff, in low tariff, in no tariff, unionists, nullificationists, Constitutionalists, States' rights shouters, sound money men, paper money men, a mob whose only common denominator was an implacable hatred of the enormously popular Jackson. (Webster was eternally puzzled by what he called "the outdoor popularity of General Jackson.") The combination was even nameless until Webb of the *Courier & Inquirer*, who had been bought, hoof and hide, by Biddle, suggested the label "Whig," which was adopted.

Sometime after Jackson's reëlection there was a

rift between the friendly enemies. Possibly Clay may have learned of one of those "private as murder" missives preserved by the careful Biddle. Or a busybody may have retailed to Webster his friend's protest against his attempt quietly to make a little political interest in Pennsylvania for himself. "I don't talk about Mr. Clay. I have done talking about him, Mr. Plumer," said Webster glumly to a New England acquaintance. And when the Illustrious Defender made his first Western trip, and was everywhere received with acclaim, his fellow-Whig made the philosophical and damaging observation that cheers and votes were two distinct and separate things.

Enemies said publicly that the trip was undertaken in the interests of the Bank of the United States and at its expense. Actually Webster was heavily interested in Western lands, and was planning further investments; his swing around the circle was partly investigating, partly political fence-building. The Lake steamship *Daniel Webster* conveyed him part of the way. Vast crowds turned out to greet him everywhere; he was the most spectacular show-figure in the country with the possible exception of Jackson. Naturally, this pleased and encouraged him. He was enthusiastic, indeed quite emotional, in some of his apostrophes.

Cholera turned him from his route. It supplied an excuse for his not visiting Mr. Clay, who deeply and

courteously regretted the disappointment. While he was in Ohio, the Siamese twins, Cheng and Yang, were convicted of jointly assaulting and battering an aged cit who had cast doubts upon their indivisibility, and a humorous editor suggested that Mr. Webster, as the illustrious champion of Union, "one and inseparable," be retained to test the constitutionality of the five dollar fine imposed. The Kentucky papers admiringly dubbed him the "Boxing Giant." If there was an episode of triumphant fisticuffs to justify the sobriquet, the record of it is lost in the mists. Everywhere reference was made to his imposing presence, his commanding height. Webster was little above the average tallness, but he carried himself so superbly that most people believed him to be well above six feet.

The Washington to which he returned was a hotbed of social warfare as the aftermath of the scandal which had disrupted Jackson's cabinet. That lively, lovely good fellow of the Franklin House bar, Peggy O'Neill, had married her distinguished suitor, and had soon risen from the status of Mrs. Senator Eaton to that of Mrs. Secretary Eaton, when Jackson conferred upon her husband the portfolio of War. Society undertook to cold-shoulder the lady. The President, who was devoted to her in a wholly innocent way—his allegiance to his dead wife's memory was too well known for any misinterpretation to attach to the rela-

tionship—declared with his favorite oath that officialdom must and should receive her. "He thinks he can by-the-Eternal this Pothouse Peggy into our parlors," stormed a superior dame. Very likely the Cabinet would have accepted the new arrival; the Cabinet wives would not. The social tempest in a teapot became a political issue of the first magnitude when Jackson threatened to make his official household too hot for the husband of any wife who would not receive Mrs. Eaton. There were wholesale resignations, presumably under uxorial dictation. The bland and virtuous widower, Van Buren, remained, escorting the beauty to public places and endeavoring to pour the oil of his kindly diplomacy upon the troubled waters. This, as much as anything else, made him Jackson's heir to the Presidency.

Washington was treated to the spectacle of the pacific Secretary Ingham going about his official business, very private, through alleys and by-streets, while the bellicose Secretary Eaton waited on Pennsylvania Avenue, very public, with a large pistol and the avowed intention of perforating the honorable gentleman whose wife had Said Things about *his* wife. Fashion's pet clergyman repeated the slanders —they had to do with rumors of an alleged infant whose arrival, while the fair Peggy's first husband was on a voyage, could not be accommodated to the calendar—and when unable to substantiate his loose talk

for the sufficient reason that it lacked foundation, was driven from his pulpit and the city.

What part the Websters took in the affair is uncertain. Probably none. Caroline Webster, born Le Roy, would hardly have been eager to open her doors to the ex-tavern beauty. Webster was amused and presumably gratified, as it was another dilemma in the troubled career of Old Hickory. Local chroniclers assure us that the fair Peggy was superior not only in beauty, style and charm, but also in wit and information to most of those who snubbed her. One of her last manifestations in political life was an ingenuous attempt to bribe some high officials in favor of a measure in which she was interested. Those who learn their politics on the hither side of a bar are likely to be practical in the application of principles.

The national Capital was now one terminus of the first American steam railroad system. The Baltimore and Ohio, after experimenting with treadmill motive power, which was wasteful, and with sails, which involved a certain capriciousness of schedule owing to the limited capacity for tacking, had allowed a crazy New Yorker named Peter Cooper to try out his locomotive. General derision and skepticism changed to acclaim when it achieved a brilliant six miles per hour. A contest between horse and steam power was arranged. It is said that Webster, a connoisseur and lover of horse-flesh, bet against the machine. If so,

his judgment was sound. The "locomotivator" started well enough, but internal complications set in, and after a series of spasmodic dashes accompanied by a terrifying uproar, it stopped and did not resume. The team of horses finished under a wrap, while Mr. Cooper raged with a hammer amidst his silent machinery. Within a few months the horses were banished, Mr. Webster and his friends were traveling by steam, and the papers published daily schedules with a woodcut of the locomotive at the top.

These were busy days for the Illustrious Defender. His official oratorical output was enormous, his correspondence immense. Honors poured in upon him. He was President of the Boston Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and an honorary member or officer of all sorts of learned, literary, historical, and archæological organizations all of which expected a speech, or at least a letter. His health was not of the best. He records a Christmas dinner consisting of "a handful of magnesia and a bowl of gruel." Two enemies which were to plague and deplete him for the remainder of his life were laying initial siege to his powerful constitution. He developed a summer asthma and a chronic diarrhea.

For the latter he dosed himself with one of those noxious "cholera cures," the vital principle of which is opium. He was, of course, ignorant of the nature of the nostrum. But this frequent and perhaps habit-

ual drugging may well have caused his occasional descents into black depths of depression when life seemed futile and purposeless to his exhausted mind. It may also help to account for the insensate optimism which inspired his long list of wildcat investments.

CHAPTER XIII

ADVENTUROUS FINANCE

NOBODY can read the self-indited record of Senator Webster's life in the speculative days of the Thirties without realizing that money, not his profession nor his career, was the chief preoccupation of his mind. He seriously debated quitting politics the better to look after his ventures. The get-rich-quick-spirit was rampant, stimulated by the reaction from the Bank panic which Biddle and Webster had stage-managed. Everybody was gambling in U. S. Bank stock, New York Canal, swamp reclamation schemes, Mexican mines, Ohio canal loan, city lots, Western lands, Eastern lands, and such exotic wildcats as, hunted out of England, had crossed the Atlantic to stalk Yankee dollars.

Land was the most risky of investments. So shrewd a financier as Biddle warned his subordinates to make loans upon it only with rigid caution. To land, the heart and hopes of Webster were inevitably attracted. That his ventures in New Hampshire had resulted in uniform loss and one complete failure, did not discourage him. His son Fletcher, whose qualifications

as an expert on real-estate values were, to say the least, unproven, was buying for his account in Illinois, in Wisconsin, in Michigan. One purchase of eight hundred acres in the Kalamazoo District so pleased the Senator that he promised "as much capital as you can use" in the fall.

Westward was not the only direction in which the avid investor was turning his eyes. He became president of the Ellsworth Land and Lumber Co., a Maine incorporation, which showed no profits on the $45,000 allotment of stock to him. He contributed not only his money but the prestige of his name to the Clamorgan Grant, a Mississippi Valley project of extreme financial variability, exploited by British capital. These expenditures exhausted his income and kept him juggling bank loans between the various institutions favorable to him. Yet by the middle of the decade his income was princely, nearly $23,000.

The claims business was lively—French, Spanish, and Danish—though it was not without its disappointments. One of these setbacks roused Webster to journalistic resentment.

"When will governments learn," he demanded sadly and anonymously in a *National Intelligencer* editorial, "that justice is the first and greatest element of all true public policy?"

Among the letters to his Boston office at this period, when he was so hot on the trail of claims fees, is one

to the faithful Kinsman, never before printed, and too curious to omit.

"My dear Sir:

"Will you slip the enclosed letter out of its blank cover and drop it into the post office, without looking at the address, with your own hand?

"Yours, Dan'l Webster."

These must have been turgid waters, indeed, wherein the highly confidential factotum could not be trusted. Privacy does not necessarily involve wrongdoing, and, of course, the matter may not have been legal or financial. But if it was personal and so extremely secret, why, one wonders, select Kinsman for such an errand?

Some of Webster's associations were dubious. The purchasable Webb, of the *New York Courier & Inquirer*, was on close terms with him for a time. A series of letters, Webb to Webster, have an unpleasant suggestion of the strong-arm method. Webb wanted money. He was insolvent and could not borrow from the banks which had already suffered at his hands. He did not try to negotiate a loan direct from Webster, probably being too well informed as to his financial status. But the Senator had rich friends in Boston. Why should he not arrange through them an accommodation of $50,000 for the *Courier & Inquirer?*

The statesman was plainly perturbed, though anxious to oblige; witness his reply:

"To J. Watson Webb—

"My dear Sir:

"I have just received yours written at Baltimore Tuesday evening, and exceedingly regret your disappointments. On many accounts it is an unlucky moment for such an unexpected turn of ill-luck; as to what you propose, I do not know what might be done, if I were at home; but the sum is so large and the objects so far off, from those to be applied to, that I should despair of any success, in attempting to effect the object by correspondence. To the extent of any assistance in my power, there or elsewhere, I will most readily exert myself to promote your wishes. It is possible those who write you may yet go on, as you expected, or you may, before you reach home, hit on some other expedient. If neither of these should happen, let me know, how any letter from me, to confidential friends, or other act of aid, can be of service to you.

"Yours truly,

"D. W."

But—fifty thousand dollars! Where could he touch such a bonanza? Our unlucky financier must have reflected bitterly that for himself he had never

ventured to such heights of desumation. Even from his *fidus Achates*, Franklin Haven, he considered "say 10 or 20 thousand dollars" as "a pretty large sum for me." Once, indeed, in a later time of desperation, he did hint to Nicholas Biddle, at a fifty thousand dollar mortgage on his New England properties (could this have included his adored Marshfield?) in that letter containing the prudent proviso, "if the conveyance could be made to anybody not connected with the Bank."

Failing of the full sum, Webb now modified his terms, though not his tone. Much could be done with twenty thousand. He thinks he can lay his hands on half of it. "You must induce some of your friends to loan me the same amount," he writes. That "must" has a sinister sound. Upon what presumption did this sturdy beggar find courage to address his imperative to Daniel Webster? The hostile and not over-reliable *Washington Globe* indicated that Webb was endorser for Webster on a loan from Nicholas Biddle, personally; but it is difficult to see what value the journalist's name would have on stamped paper. Undoubtedly he was in possession of facts regarding Webster's relations with the Bank of the United States, which would make hurtful reading. This may have had its influence. Or the politician may have been looking forward to a day when the support of the *Courier & Inquirer* would be valuable.

In any case, far from being in a position to aid an importunate associate, he was now resorting to devious expedients to keep his own head above water. A friend for whom he endorsed a note left him in the lurch for $16,000. He had to appeal to one of the solid men of Boston, Samuel Frothingham, the banker, for $17,000 to meet this and other demands. The loan absorbed his New Hampshire holdings, upon which he had rested his earlier hope of profits.

A perverse twist of fortune in one of his transactions resulted in damaging publicity. The Commonwealth Bank of Boston, issuing notes in the reckless fashion of the period, had paid fishermen's pensions in paper which proved worthless when the institution failed. Many of Webster's constituents and some of his humble friends were among those mulcted. With the honest indignation which injustice to the underdog aroused in him always, the Senator from Massachusetts called for an investigation. The evidence brought out that the crash was due in part to insufficiently secured loans. Among the names adduced were, to the Senator's discomfort, two Websters, David and Daniel, paired on the same piece of obsolete paper. How could it have happened? Senator Webster could not recall any outstanding note at that particular bank; either he must have forgotten or the bank had failed to notify him of developments.

The other Webster was probably that same David, a

nephew, who, true to the practice of the breed, had tried to borrow of Ezekiel in 1824; now a resident of Maine. His testimony as to the unlucky note is illuminative. Daniel had come to him with a proposition to draw on him for $10,000.

"Ten thousand dollars?" said he. "I haven't got that much, never have had, and never expect to have."

That was all right, Daniel assured him; he had only to write "Accepted," with his signature, across the draft. That constituted an acceptance, upon which the drawer could get money at the bank. Only too glad to be of service to the honored exemplar of the Webster name, he assented: quite possibly there was some financial consideration also. The acceptance was discounted at the Bank of the Metropolis in New York, and thence transferred to the Commonwealth Bank of Boston.

When David was called upon for payment, he blandly stated that he had no money. Senator Webster had assured him that he need be of no concern in the matter; at the proper time, he himself would take up the paper. The bank seems to have made no further fuss over it. But the newspapers got hold of it and were nasty. The opposition press was being quite unpleasant, anyway. For example, the *Boston Post* published this highly un-Socratic dialogue:

"Who denounces speculators in the public land?

"Daniel Webster.

"Who is the largest one of these speculators?

"Daniel Webster.

"Who denounces the despised banks for lending money to speculators in public lands?

"Daniel Webster.

"Who has borrowed money for them for this purpose?

"Daniel Webster.

"Who owes the deposites banks?

"Daniel Webster.

"Why was not the proposition in Congress to have the names of its members who had borrowed money of the deposites banks to buy public lands carried?

"Because one party was found to be as deep in the mud as the other was in the mire.

"Who was up to his chin?

"Daniel Webster."

Do these and other transactions indicate deliberate dishonesty? I think not. Standards in money transactions a century ago were much laxer than to-day they are. What is now a felony was then a common practice, the issuance of checks against an inadequate balance. Daniel Webster always, I think, intended to settle up. Almost his last expressed ambition, when he was facing the end amidst "the groundwhirl of the

perished leaves of hope," was that he might die, even with the world. I doubt whether he ever committed himself to any course, financial or other, for which he could not provide a plausible defense before the judgment seat of his own soul. It might be the argument of the special pleader. But it would be adequate to convince the lenient court.

If, for a time, Webster would rather be rich than be President, he did not really lose sight of the glowing goal. For a time it was currently reported in Washington that he was making up to Jackson, with a view to becoming Secretary of State, tactical mentor (as if Jackson needed one!) and, by familiar party succession, the nominee, against Clay if need be. In the flux and change of the political chemistry of the day, this was not impossible. Van Buren believed it. But concern for his own threatened future may have bred the suspicion.

That the two leaders of the anti-Jackson party were drifting asunder was obvious. Webster seemed to be losing "that peculiar dread of giving offense to Clay" which was a topic of speculative comment in Capital circles. He voted against the Kentuckian's tariff compromise, which appeased mutinous South Carolina, and opposed him in other measures. On the Bank of the United States they stood solidly together, each supposing himself to be Biddle's choice for the nomination. Voluminous though he was with a pen, the

banker could be private enough with his opinions. Clay probably, Webster certainly, never knew his preference.

Both of them were on the wrong side for success. Jacksonian Democracy, after the landslide of the reelection, was functioning with a solidarity and competency not since equaled. The "Kitchen Cabinet," guided by those two master-tacticians of journalism, Kendall and Blair, had devised a system of carrying an issue direct to the people, to the scandal and dismay of the old line leaders who considered political power the prerogative of the few and great. Opposition to the President involved the concentrated fire of these sharp-shooters, and many a good man was carried from the contest, feet first. It was plain as the dominating nose on Andrew Jackson's gnarly face, that he would dictate the Democratic succession, and presently, that the successor would be his Vice-President, Van Buren.

The Whigs' on the other hand, were both various and variable in political creed. They were little more than antis. If Jackson were to die, as some contemporary remarked, the Whig party would fall apart for lack of glue. They considered themselves to represent the upper strata of society, and with some justice, as they were composed of a large majority of the polite and affluent; capitalists, bankers, merchants, clergy, lawyers, doctors and professors, "all who desire to rank with the aristocratic or genteel portion of so-

ciety." To them the Jacksonians were "rabble." The "rabble" called their opponents aristocrats, dandiprats, Biddle-boys, and less polite and printable names. It was no era of good feeling.

Echoes of this acrimony sounded in legislative halls. A member of the House named Boon gave notice from the floor of his intent to skin alive a colleague named Hallstead. A Congressional investigator in committee meeting, becoming annoyed at a witness, drew a pistol and announced: "If you attempt to say a word, sir, I will put you to death." Henry Clay, leaving the Senate to visit the lower house where a bill in which he was interested met the disfavor of the Speaker, addressed to that gentleman an unofficial adjuration to "Go home, God damn you, where you belong." Exacerbated Senators employed such unparliamentary terms as "dastard," "liar," "coward," "ruffian," or likened an adversary's efforts to "the barking of a puppy." But when one Senator stigmatized another as "no gentleman," there were pained cries of "Order! Order!" and the injurious imputation was repentantly withdrawn.

Amidst these asperities Webster was almost uniformly scrupulous in lofty courtesy. "He is milder, more polite and accessible than he used to be," testifies a lifelong acquaintance and adds that he can "be satisfied with nothing short of the highest," an ambition to which he attributes this mellowing of manner. In

this direction his prospects were brightening, or seemed to be. Favorable reports came, in 1835, from Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Delaware, and Maryland. All of New England except Maine and his native New Hampshire where that seed of Salem witches, Ike Hill, was rampant, regarded him as its logical candidate. Indications were that he would go into next year's Whig convention with a head-start over his rivals.

Undercurrents were setting in the opposite direction; his strength ebbed insensibly away on them. He was attainted as an aristocrat without sympathy for the masses. His Biddle-and-Bank connection was a vulnerable spot, though he vigorously denied any improper influence of the "Monster" upon his legislative course, and nothing definite could be proven against him. He suspected that Clay, who had had his innings four years earlier and might now in a spirit of turn-about enlist under a leader with better prospects (but Clay had no faith in Webster's chances of election if nominated), was playing him false. In fact, he became quite pessimistic about a world so rife with disappointments. Disgusted but still resolute to keep his language pure, he wrote to a Connecticut correspondent:

"I believe the D—l is in a great portion of the people of the United States, but that you and I

shall not fall down & worship him in whatever shape he may appear.

"Yours with regards, let the D—l be in whom he will."

The D—l, it appeared, was in all the delegates except those from Massachusetts, who registered fourteen votes for the favorite son, the only ones he received.

General Harrison, a harmless and negatively popular person with a thin aureole of heroism from his military campaigns and a minor political record, was extracted from retirement to be the standard bearer. Webster, mortified at his own poor showing, attributed much of his apparent unpopularity to Clay. Clay's friends helped to put through Harrison. It is not likely that they did the disappointed Massachusetts orator any real injury thereby. On the contrary, they probably saved him from a sound beating. No Whig could have defeated the suave Van Buren, backed as he was by the perfectly functioning Jackson machine.

He won an easy victory over the "hero of Tippecanoe."

CHAPTER XIV

A SENATOR'S BUSY DAY

"The heavens are black with thunder,
The earth is sore oppressed,
The zenith, rent asunder,
Foretells the Judgment test,"

cheerfully boomed Senator Webster, descending the stairs at 6:30 of a cool Washington morning in search of breakfast. After a week of too many parties with too much to eat and perhaps a slight overindulgence in drink, he had been feeling sore oppressed himself and subsequently, in a sense, was pretty well rent asunder, for his physician had put him on a three days' treatment of Cheltenham salts, calomel in 1½ grain doses, volatile liniment, sage tea gargle, borax, senna, magnesia, and Family Purge. Medicine was medicine in the brave days of old. He was now restored, grateful and ravenous. He had been up for two hours reading and writing letters.

Opening the kitchen door he bellowed a bloodcurdling threat to his black cook. It was received with a chuckle and a deferential "Mawnin', Senator." Mr. Webster was as incapable of harshness to a slave as of

brutality to an animal, a fact of which old Charley Brown was well aware. Pending the arrival of the eggs, bacon, chops, kidneys, ham, fishballs, fried cakes, hominy and coffee wherewith he proposed to replenish a depleted interior, he brought in his favorite paper from the stoop and scanned not the political news or the editorial page, but the local columns. Ah, there it was, the expected paragraph! It began with a pleasant mention of the surprise occasioned in the lobby when the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts was seen, sporting a new cane of buckeye wood, since he usually walked unsupported. To questioners, continued the article, he explained that the stick was a symbolic gift from a group of adherents from Ohio, the Buckeye State, who had called to present it to him. The account concluded:

> "If one might be permitted to put forth the moral of the incident we should say that it was proof of the conviction on the part of the citizens of a great state that he to whom it was presented, it was expected, would make use of all power and all instruments entrusted to him in defense of the rights of the people. On being rallied on the subject Mr. W. said, 'You see, sir, I am prepared in times of public difficulty to lean on the buckeyes.' Long may the Buckeyes and Mr. Webster live in this mutual respect for each other."

Good! That was the kind of thing that made a man popular, "common" in the desirable sense; expunged from him the taint of being a Bank aristocrat. And the *National Intelligencer* had printed it, *verbatim*, as he wrote and sent it in. Very obliging of Messrs. Gales and Seaton.*

Breakfast finished—could it possibly be a twinge of indigestion that he felt? the doctor was supposed to have exorcised that demon—he took Charles Brown and a huge basket, and walked down to the public market to select the viands for to-morrow night when guests were dining. With the butchers he was affable and knowing, and they on their part respectful to his expert knowledge as well as to his official position, for none was a better judge of a saddle of mutton, a Potomac River "rock," or a tasty opossum than the great orator.

Feeling the better for his walk, he prolonged it, after sending the servant home heavy laden; visited his wine merchants, where again he showed himself judicious in brands and vintages; then to his tailors where he ordered three fancy vests and a new seat to his black pants (*vide* bill for same in the New Hampshire Historical Society) and finally to the Senate Hall. In his committee room he found a memorandum for immediate work. He must get up an ad-

* The original of this early and expert example of press agency, in Mr. Webster's writing as he prepared it for print, is in the New York Public Library.

dress for the Congressional Temperance Society, whose invitation he had accepted to the ribald amusement of one of the so-called humorous weeklies. Title: "The Evils of Strong Drink." Memo: if possible, work in some reference to the Constitution. Doubtless he would be introduced as the Great Upholder; that would give an opening. He was resolved, henceforth, to make no address without mentioning the Constitution; it was his gonfalon, his emblem, his political hall-mark. *In hoc signo vinces!*

A clipping from the gossip column of a local scandal sheet. John Quincy Adams was quoted as having said at a tea: "Hugh White and Daniel Webster are now the golden calves of the people, and their dull sayings are repeated for wit and their grave inanity for wisdom." Very likely it was authentic. It sounded like the old spitfire. Should he reply with something anonymously sharp in the *National Intelligencer?* No; let it pass. It could do no harm.

A letter from his son, Edward, now in Dartmouth. The young scoundrel had been getting into debt, as he had penitently confessed in a former letter. The father had replied, severely animadverting upon the folly and guilt of his procedure, and suggesting darkly that immoral courses were probably at the bottom of it. In this answer the lad pleaded that "the only immoral thing which I have purchased is wine." Well, there was wine enough back in the 1790's, and much

that was stronger, and no talk of immorality. Perhaps the boy wasn't so blameworthy after all. The debts would have to be cleared up. But where on earth—an earth full of insistent creditors and overdrawn bank accounts—was the money ever to come from!

The next letter in the file was another call upon his resources. Ray Thomas, his young Marshfield protégé who had been sent to Illinois to buy up advantageous lands, had reported on a mortgage in the promising city of Chicago. From all that he could learn of it, Chicago bade fair to develop into a live business center, possibly as thriving as Portsmouth or Worcester. It was advantageously placed. Real estate within its limits ought to bring swift and lavish returns. If only he could negotiate a sufficient loan! Or why not take the mortgage, give a note for the amount, and raise the loan with the mortgage as security? Memo: to write Mr. Biddle or Mr. Frothingham about it. Mr. Frothingham ought to be in an amiable frame of mind. He had just been appointed to a fat position in the U. S. Bank, at a salary of eight thousand dollars a year. Eight thousand! Why, the Secretary of State got only six thousand. "Verily the Monster does things on a monstrous large scale," sighed the money-pressed Senator. He scribbled a note to his son, Fletcher, also land-looking for him, out in Wisconsin.

"I should certainly have made a dash at some of those water powers. It could hardly fail to do well to buy the land embracing a large waterfall, although now in a wilderness, if it be where population must in time reach it."

He must look into some of these District of Columbia properties, too, advertised in column after column of sales for taxes. The names of these farmlets and market plots whose "soil is so poor that it can't raise a mortgage," as a paragrapher gibed, reflected the dreams, disgust, or humorous resignation of the proprietors: "Hard Struggle," "Hornet's Nest," "Myself," "Rights of Man," "Hard Bargain Re-surveyed," "Poverty Knoll," "Now or Never," "Hope," "What You Please." If contiguous holdings could be bought cheap enough and combined, a large estate on the borders of Washington might be a sound investment as well as a pleasant refuge for one designing to remain permanently at the national Capital.

But did he intend to remain? Sometimes the prospect looked too dark for contemplation. That accursed question of slavery was creeping in everywhere. It might yet make as much trouble between North and South as the tariff. He had glanced at Judge Beverly Tucker's romance "The Partizan Leader" which every one was discussing. It forecast a civil war between the two sections. Webster could not bring himself to

credit such a possibility. He could well believe, however, that Clay and Calhoun were trying to do what they failed of in 1833, work out a new Constitution—he shuddered at the thought of any tinkering with that sacred document—which should give the South permanent domination. Memo: to draft his opinion on this point for Mr. Biddle. He wondered whether the "Emperor" really understood how dangerous a man Clay was. . . . Disturbing thought: *Could* he trust the financier to burn those letters, private as murder, in which he dealt with Clay and others?

How he would like to get away from it all and go on a long visit to England! But that again would take money. Money, always money!

What was on the calendar for to-day? The Bank, of course! Also that perennial topic and storm-center, Texas. There might be trouble in that quarter, later on, when, separated from Mexico, she should want to come into the United States as slave-holding territory. He would fight that to the end. No further extension of slavery. He had served pretty plain notice on the Southerners by his opinion, as an authority on the Constitution, that Congress had the power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. That, of course, did not commit him to the proposition that it should exercise this power. But it had stirred up the pro-Slavery lot. Some had turned cool to him. Others had essayed tentative blandishments as to future sup-

port for the nomination. The Abolitionists acclaimed him. But the adherence of those fanatics was likely to cost more than it was worth. . . . He must watch carefully for any change of sentiment in the South.

He went in to his seat, answering "Present" in his deep, resonant voice which always gave his constituents in the gallery, if any were there, a secure feeling that he was on guard and the nation safe. Nothing of importance developed, but Mr. Webster enjoyed the consciousness of being pointed out to a group of fluttering débutantes from Philadelphia who had been brought on the floor by a socially and politically important hostess. Not to have visited the upper house and been presented to half a dozen of the lions was, for the bud of that day, a failure in the social curriculum. Mr. Webster thought this lot rather pasty of face and of unlustrous personality, as if late hours had made them languid. Nevertheless, when one of them stepped forward and gave him a posy, he made her a handsome bow and a kind, little speech.

A message requested his presence outside, on an appointment. It must be that book-agent fellow that Poindexter had asked him to see. The name escaped him, but he recalled some unpromising details: the young man was of doubtful antecedents, and indeterminate color; called himself a naturalist; had tried portrait painting; married a well-to-do American girl and used up most of her patrimony; hard-pressed in

Louisville, Ky., borrowed a fiddle, turned dancing-master (he was part French, which explained it) and cleared up $2,000, with which he continued his studies in natural history. He proved as queer looking as Mr. Webster, who greeted him loftily, expected. But he did not try to sell the statesman a book. Instead, he asked eagerly whether it was true that Canada gray geese rested at Marshfield.

Marshfield! A wave of nostalgia swept the lover of woodland and shore. When could he escape the treadmill and return to breathe its balm for restless body and worn soul? What did this fellow know of Marshfield?

Then the visitor began to talk modestly but fluently about the birds of New England. Mr. Webster was no mean naturalist, and certainly no slack talker, but in ten minutes he realized that this stranger knew more about wild life than he had ever dreamed of, and he sat in rapt silence, for once the perfect listener.

"I shall subscribe to your book," said he at length—the session was nearing its end by now—"and I will send you some letters of introduction which may prove useful. What did you say the name was?"

"Audubon, sir, J. J. Audubon."

"That young man will come to something," prophesied Senator Webster at luncheon.

Judge Story had sent word asking the Senator to join him at tea and meet Harriet Martineau, an Eng-

lish literary lady, who was being lionized by all Washington. So there, as Miss Martineau reported it in her brisk way, was "Mr. Webster leaning back at his ease, telling stories, cracking jokes, shaking the sofa with burst after burst of laughter."

It was a weighty gathering. Clay, Story, Preston, Benton, Lowndes, Poindexter, Foote, half the cabinet, several of the Supreme Court Justices, frequented her soirées. Senator Webster, who liked her at sight, leaned forward to shout into her ear-trumpet:

"Don't you go and believe me to be ambitious. No man can despise that sort of thing more than I. I would not sacrifice an hour of my ease for all the honors and powers in the world."

This was talk for ladies. It did not fool the shrewd globe-trotter. Both Webster and Clay, she afterward thought, were destroyed by their own Presidential ambitions. For character, though not for company, she preferred the somber, straightforward Calhoun.

There was talk of moral conditions in Washington. Were they deteriorating? Many thought so. Heavy drinking and heavy gambling was the order of the day. Somebody whispered that Clay dropped eight thousand dollars in a game of draw poker. Young women whose professional status was obvious in their dress and demeanor were conspicuous in all public places. There was said to be an organized procuring trade in young girls, maintained by importations from

Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. High official names were listed in the regular patronage of the houses. Society set this down to the debasing influence of the Jackson régime, although the personal propriety of "Old Hickory" himself was admitted to be beyond cavil.

That English fanatic, Buckingham, over here on a temperance mission, had stirred resentment by his criticisms of Washington's moral tone. Senator Webster liked Mr. Buckingham; had even made a trip with him and introduced him to a crowded meeting; but he doubted the wisdom of a foreigner's attack upon American modes of life.

Anything which tended to stir up feeling between England and America made him uneasy. The Canadian situation was unpromising. Trouble-fostering volunteer organizations on both sides of the line—Hunters' Lodges, Scions of Liberty, Patriotic Sons and the like—were dressing up in uniforms and making silly and ferocious noises. Sooner or later that vital matter of the Northeastern boundary line must be settled. Any outbreak between the two countries would seriously complicate the adjustment. Senator Webster intended to make that subject peculiarly his own; indeed he had already devoted laborious study to it. A definite achievement in the realm of international relations would be an asset to his career. Moreover, his patriotism was enlisted. He wished to get all that

was possible for his country. Memo: to write to Judge Story and ask him to give a day or two of his time to a summary of the situation.

He left the gathering, stopped for a draught at Gadsby's, was courteous and effective with a dozen visitors to Washington who were enormously honored at being presented to the great man, was haled in for another drink by that pleasant fellow, Clayton, whom you couldn't help but like, politics aside, and his own associated "golden calf," Hugh Lawson White, with whom he had a laugh over old J. Q. Adams's impotent fumings.

"It is of current rumor," said White, "that he keeps a diary into which he discharges his surplus venom each night before retiring."

"If it were to disintegrate," put in Benton, from the far end of the bar, whose imagination was lurid at times, "the separate sheets would wriggle up and down the streets, sinking their fangs into the nation's brightest and best."

Whereupon they had one more, and parted. At home the Senator's wife called down the stair-well to him:

"Are you attending the dinner and reception at the Ingersolls' with me, Mr. Webster?"

"I think not, my dear. There is an evening session of the Senate."

"It will be one of the occasions of the season."

Very likely. Nevertheless he did not care to go. For light society talk he had little taste. Of music he had no appreciation. The whist, if any, would be of bumblepuppy grade. As for dancing, he was no "jumping jigamaroon," never had been when young. He agreed, though quite privately, with a recent English mentor (not the amiable Miss Martineau) who found the Washington functions dull and spiritless, the women wearied and lackadaisical, and a total lack of a circle "in which any literary or scientific subject was the topic of conversation." There would be time to drive up to George Town and drop in at the Russian Legation. Baron Alexandre de Bodiscoe was newly in charge, and had made his informal evenings a delightful break in the monotony of the official routine. Clay would be there, and Rufus King; Mangum (if capable of ambulation), perhaps Poindexter, who could always walk even when his other capacities were alcoholically fused; very likely Rhea or Tazewell or Wright; a dozen of the gayer young diplomats, possibly Van Buren—no; of course not, now that he was President. Partisanship aside, Van Buren was a good fellow. He never held a grudge. If any one had kept him, Webster, out of the coveted ministry to St. James's, as he and Clay had kept Van Buren —still it was only politics. Jackson, not "Little Van" had been the target of their sharpshooting. He remembered the night that he and Jackson and Van sang

that trio at the President's House, and the faces of the servants. One couldn't help but like Van Buren. Of course, he must be beaten for reëlection.

Bodiscoe was another good fellow. Played an excellent hand at whist, and was no sorry opponent at poker. Those Russian liquors with the unpronounceable names were extremely tasty, though they had the effect upon some of rendering simpler terms equally unpronounceable. Not upon Mr. Webster. He never lost his capacity for fluent and explicit speech. Decidedly he would go to George Town.

On his way, he recalled an anecdote concerning one of his bibulous contemporaries, who, having imbibed too freely at the Franklin House, proceeded to vaunt his powers of alcoholic resistance.

"'S funny thing abou' me," he confided to a gratified circle of listeners. "Drink never affec's me excep' in legs. *Think* perf'ly straight. *Talk* perf'ly straight. Only trouble with me is, my wees get neek."

Mr. Webster thought that he might oblige the company with that story. There would be other stories, not so innocent. Manners as well as morals were easy in Washington. But he had no taste for the ribald. Profanity and smut he eschewed. He would listen, unmoved and unmoving, and he discovered, with an inner and grim satisfaction, that his somber, black stare often had the effect of smothering loose-lipped laughter into abashed silence.

At the Russian's he found a hilarious gathering around a punch bowl. The Baron came forward, both hands outstretched in his florid foreign fashion, to greet the honored guest. There would be a leetle, pleasant game later, he said. Much later there was in that house a pleasant but by no means leetle game which temporarily eliminated Washington's liveliest place of entertainment, the host having lost all but honor. He informed the world of the tragedy in words which were a stock society quotation for years. "I have to make announce, ladies and gentlemen, of no more of our leetle parties for now. Because why? The fund for their expend, ladies and gentlemen, is exhaust."

Senator Webster explained that he could not remain for the game. He had come merely for a social drink and a chat. Very good, said the Baron. The honor of a glass with the Honorable Senator, and no heel taps. This formality completed, Mr. Webster told his story of the Franklin House bar inebriate. Vast applause and laughter, followed by drinks all around. Would the newcomer oblige with a song? Disclaiming any technical vocal qualities, the Senator rendered his old favorite:

"Solid Men of Boston,
Drink no strong potations.
Solid Men of Boston,
Make no long orations."

More laughter and applause and another round. Mr. Webster was assured that he was the life of the party, and why not let the Senate get through with its session as best it might without him? No: he could not do that. The matter of the French Claims might come up, and this was a burning injustice, the righting of which was very near to his heart.

"And his pocket," whispered a young French diplomat.

Some one obligingly offered a ride. Then he was in a carriage, rolling back toward Washington, and glad of the fresh air. The coachman, as they reached the city, cut through a side street where they were slowed up because of the equipages, waiting at either curb. The sight recalled sharply to Senator Webster's mind the afternoon's discussion at Miss Martineau's. Here was palpable evidence of the sort of thing which gave Washington a bad name. The *maison* was one of the most notorious in the city. It was conducted by a degraded young Philadelphian who had started it with his own sisters as nucleus. Among the turnouts, the scandalized Senator identified several private carriages belonging to acquaintances of his in official life, the coachees playing snap or pitching pennies as they waited. Had the owners no decency or decorum? At least they might hire a public conveyance and so refrain from advertising their depravity. Something ought to be done about that moral

plague-spot. Could it, perhaps, be proven unconstitutional? Probably not; he remembered nothing in the document covering that point. But surely Congress could take some action against open shamelessness. Memo: to write Story—no; Story wouldn't know about that—to call for an investigation of local conditions. Better not, though, perhaps. Lightnings of that sort, loosed, were likely to strike in unexpected spots.

The Senate Hall was hot, close, reeking of tobacco fumes. He felt a natural desire to go to sleep. Some conscientious but wearisome bore, was droning along about the public lands. The claims motion was not likely to come up. A page approached him, laid on his desk a document and passed on. One glance at it banished desire for sleep. It was a virulent attack upon him, impugning his political honesty, his personal honor and his private character with equal venom and irresponsibility. Who could be the author? Several possibilities flashed through his mind. After all, what did it matter who wrote the filth? He would deal with it, and at once. He half rose.

Beneath him the floor was practicing strange, seismic motions. His desk swayed back and forth, so that he was constrained to seize it firmly. When it steadied, he freed one hand, lifted the offensive pamphlet and held it up for inspection.

"No title page, gentlemen. Anonymous. No au-

thor. The poor thing is fatherless, motherless."

For ten minutes of withering language he paid his respects to the journalism of the nameless. The Senate listened, rapt. At the close there was a ripple, a sigh of admiration more satisfying than the applause of the hand. There was a buzz of comment, too, for some of his shafts had sped to individual bull's-eyes. A voice said:

"Webster, drunk, is the peer of any man in this chamber, sober." Drunk? What did they mean, drunk? Was a man drunk who could handle a subject as he had managed that scurrilous libel?

"You will not print it, will you, Senator?" asked a colleague deprecatingly.

"Print? No. The dog isn't worth it. Let him go."

Willie P. Mangum and Tom Ewing were waiting for him in the aisle. Not that he needed their help. He would repudiate with a suitable indignation the idea that he needed any man's help. *His* wees didn't get neek. Nevertheless he appreciated the friendly sense of faith in a man basely slandered, which their escort implied. They kept him between them out through the lobby. There was a private carriage near. He got into it and heard the direction given for his own address.

Home? He had thought of returning to George Town. It did not matter. Upon consideration, home

was perhaps more suitable. He was sleepy. But he had never felt better in his life. Getting toward sixty years old? What of it? He had the makings of a dozen Presidents in him. If only he could get clear of money worries. Nothing could stop him then.

CHAPTER XV

WHICH WAY TO THE PRESIDENCY?

THREE courses had opened before Webster after the defeat of the Whigs and the election of Van Buren. He could remain in the Senate and set his course again for the nomination in 1839. That would require a deal of financing. He could resign, return to the exclusive practice of the law, and earn a vast income; enough probably to clear him of debt in three years. But the drudgery of legal practice ground his soul. His will-o'-the-wisp, pursued through a quagmire of constant frustrations, was "the hope of realizing such advances as would enable me to live without carrying the green bag any longer." Finally, he could concentrate upon his multifarious ventures in lands and stocks, make a fortune as less able men had done, and return to the political arena gloriously free of obligations to any man or any institution.

Unhappily this latter course, toward which his inclinations set strongly, would require further financial extension. The times were not favorable for this. Another panic had swept the country, curtailing loans severely. Even the generous Biddle had turned unresponsive to his larger hints. Moreover, there was

too much gossip about his dealings with the "Bribery Bank," a most unjust characterization. Officially the Bank of the United States had passed from existence, its charter having expired in 1836. Politically it was very much alive, and very grimly determined upon re-establishment, under its own or another name. This would be a major issue in the next campaign. But how far was it prudent for him to be identified with it? With characteristic rancor, the *Washington Globe*, that licentious scandal-sheet of the administration, had published an attack, with his name as caption.

> "This gentleman has with due ceremony announced to the votaries of the Bank that gathered around him in New York his willingness to remain in their service. He said in reply to the Committee composed of the noblesse of the Board, 'My desire to relinquish my seat in the Senate for the two years still remaining of the term for which I was chosen would have been carried into execution at the close of the present session of the Senate, had not circumstances existed which, in the judgment of others, rendered it expedient to defer the fulfillment of that purpose, for the present.'
>
> "What are 'the circumstances' which 'render it expedient to defer the fulfillment' of his pur-

pose to resign? The Bank of the United States gives new signs of life. It is moving on a new panic—it is exerting all its power to bring the State Banks into the conditions under which it obtained its charter in 1816."

There was enough truth in this to be damaging—if anything in the disreputable *Globe* could harm a reputable official! He *had* made representations to certain friends of his regarding the sacrifice entailed upon him by remaining in the Senate. But these gentlemen were not U. S. Bank officials. Something might come of that presently.

As for the charge that the Bank manipulated the stringency, that was an absurd and malicious lie. The disturbing cause, as every intelligent man not blinded by partisan prejudice knew, was President Jackson's requirement, maintained by President Van Buren, that payment for the public lands then on sale should be made in specie. This drew the hard money reserve out of the banks. Furthermore, the State banks, swollen with the deposits of government funds, had been making loans too loosely. They were, themselves, responsible for their distresses.

Meantime Nicholas Biddle, who had become president of the Bank of the United States of Philadelphia, under a state charter, was keeping his national organization intact and powerful. It was to provide,

in the coming campaign against Van Buren, not only the sinews of war but also the backbone. How far Webster considered the "Emperor" committed to his candidacy is a matter of conjecture. J. W. Webb had written him, with an assumption of inside knowledge: "You are clearly his candidate." What a shock it would have been to the Massachusetts statesman if he could have read, in that collection of private but unburned letters, one from Congressman Cooper of South Carolina indicating that another candidate was potentially in the field: to wit, Mr. Biddle himself!

"Webster will be set up as your opponent. The South will not go for him and will go for you in preference."

That canvass did not get far. Emperor Nick's interest in it was never more than lukewarm. To be President of the United States would naturally appeal to him less than to be financial dictator, protector, and bulwark of the nation.

Whether or not he was to be the Whig nominee, our hard-worked Senator needed a vacation. Toward England he had, for some years, turned longing eyes. He had never been abroad. Not only would the journey refresh a constitution shaken by "some degree of intemperance in eating and drinking" (his own diagnosis), but it might afford him opportunity of service in the touchy situation which had developed between the two countries over the Northeastern boundary and

the destruction of the *Caroline*. It is not to be forgotten that, beneath Webster's financial chicaneries and petty political jockeying, there was a substratum of solid and genuine zeal for the United States of America and all its interests. One may be a bit of a trickster and yet a patriot. Disillusioning, but nevertheless true. We expect too much from our towering historic figures, forgetting that they are no more likely than lesser men to measure up to the hundred per cent standard of purity.

An expedient to make his trip pay for itself and return a profit occurred to him. In his Western holdings he had never lost faith. They should be worth several times what he paid for them. (Some of the property is now worth several thousand times what he paid for it. But he was unable to hold it against the pressure of his debts.) British investors were notably persuadable in the matter of American land. He wrote to Samuel Jaudon, Biddle's second-in-command, that he was anxious to go abroad but could not contrive it unless he could sell his Western plots in England. His venture in Peru, Ill., he thought worth $100,000. Profitable disposal of this and other items would enable him to pay his debts and remain in public life. How to go about the business? Could Mr. Jaudon advise? Or Mr. Biddle?

As to necessary expenses, other than his own, he cheerily expects that Mr. LeRoy will give Mrs. Web-

A Politico-Financial Cartoon

From the "broadside" published about 1834 by A. Imbert of New York.

(*Courtesy of American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.*)

ster "a few thousand dollars to enable her to accompany her husband." It does not seem to have occurred to him that a public man in receipt of a very large income, would be expected to pay his wife's way as well as his own. This ingenuous absence of shame, self-consciousness and reticence in money matters marks the beginning of a phase which was to develop into what can be regarded only as a species of moral infantilism.

That either Mr. Jaudon or Mr. Biddle came forward with anything more than advice is improbable. Their Bank had, in the previous year, loaned to the statesman-financier the notable sum of $26,700 to enable him to secure title to his real estate purchases. One of these was a mortgage in Chicago, of which the purchaser expected great things. Whether the mortgage represented the total amount or only $10,000 is difficult to determine, but what it was worth is clear enough. Upon foreclosure, five years later, it fetched exactly $1,067. As taxes and expenses upon it aggregated some $650, it was a poor outcome for the too trustful Bank.

However, the ingenious borrower had more than one string to his bow. That conference which the *Globe* had inaccurately reported brought results. A syndicate headed by R. M. Blatchford, prominent Whig merchant of New York, and one of Webster's closest friends, raised $28,000 for him. Considera-

tion for the Illustrious Defender's self-respect prompted the contributors to maintain the form of a loan. The nicety was perhaps excessive, as will appear from a later and unmasked gift. Viewed as a loan, this deal presents unusual features. Security was mentioned; property in Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Peru, Ill.; and some stock in an unborn railroad. But it was specified that no examination or evidence of title should be required other than the owner's written word. At some time—whether before or after—he seems to have pledged at least a part of this property for bank loans. However, one can seldom be certain. To attempt definite analysis of the Websterian system of finance is to court chronic vertigo.

Continuance in public life was one purpose of the fund, since it was understood that a house in Washington was to be acquired. Through another person the beneficiary bought the large and fine Swann mansion on Lafayette Square, the corner being now occupied by the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. (The notes for this chapter were arranged at Webster's own work-desk, dark and massive as himself, which was found and restored to its original site.) In the course of the preliminary negotiations, he borrowed $1,500 from one of the Swanns. As the price of the house was $14,000 and the initial payment was only fractional, he had, with his $28,000 loan, a hand-

some sufficiency for his pilgrimage. That is, it would seem a sufficiency; yet perhaps it was not, for while he was in London he borrowed five hundred pounds from a confiding but otherwise unknown gentleman named Joseph Travers.

The trip was made, *en régle*. Not only Mr. Webster's wife, but his daughter, Julia, and his brother-in-law's wife, Mrs. Paige, went along, the latter making notes for a book of incredible naïveté and dullness. Allowing all deductions for the adulatory attitude of the writer, it is nevertheless obvious that the visit was a success, even a triumph, for the "Great Western" as London dubbed him. Carriages thronged the street in front of the party's lodgings. The Yankee orator was invited, fêted, admired. But he was not overpressed to speak. One can only suspect that the canny British had been forewarned of their guest's capabilities of protracted eloquence. They may have known of his seven-hour Senate speech on the subject of finance, or of that other endurance achievement of oratory which, begun at Faneuil Hall in Boston one evening and adjourned at midnight, was resumed and barely finished on the following evening in Quincy. They took few chances of being submerged in the flood. Mr. Webster was, indeed, included in the program of an agricultural meeting, but the noble chairman cautiously limited him both as to time and subject. We may guess that he

suffered a little from the pressure of undelivered verbiage, for he repeated this address at a private dinner immediately after the meeting, where it was politely received.

English brevity surprised him. He was taken to hear the famous Sergeant Wilde who "argued an insurance question in fifteen minutes that most of us would have got an hour's speech out of," he records with regret for opportunity lost. It amazed him to observe that in the House of Commons when a legislator had something to say, he got up and said it with the least possible expenditure of breath and then sat down again. It is clear that he finds something inexplicable in this verbal parsimony.

The English liked his dignity, his unaffected Americanism, and felt the powerful magnetism of his personality. Workmen passing him on the street wondered if he were not a visiting king. Others likened him to a cathedral. Gentle little Miss Whitford reported every one delighted with his geniality and taste. She herself was agreeably surprised at his calm manner of speaking, naturally expecting of an American that he would leap in the air and give a war-whoop. "A dignified, perfectly bred man," said Carlyle, and is further quoted as remarking that he had heard much of the physical degeneracy of the Americans but had never seen such a magnificent specimen of it, which is rather un-Carlylean; while

Sydney Smith pronounced him fraudulent on the ground that "no man could possibly be as great as he looks," which is extremely Smithish.

The chorus was not unanimous. Grote and Austin encountered him on one of his off days and were disappointed in his conversational powers. Disraeli found him "a complete Brother Jonathan—a remarkable twang," but pays tribute to his physical magnificence. "I believe," he wrote, "he is considered a very refined and *spiritual* Yankee," in short, quite a notable animal from the viewpoint of the brilliant and exotic sycophant of the "faery" Victoria.

On his side, the distinguished visitor liked his trans-Atlantic cousins as much as they liked him. Their social ease and simplicity particularly excited his admiration; he innocently surmises that it must have taken a deal of drill. At Oxford he was charmed by the tremendous ovation to Wordsworth upon whom a degree was conferred. "Genius and poetry carried it all hollow over power and politics," he exults. Curious, this instinctive preference for literature over his own vocation of statesmanship. He never quite abandoned his adolescent dream of becoming a literary figure. He went to call on Wordsworth in the country, but missed him. Dickens, whom he saw prowling shyly on the outskirts of an afternoon fête, he thought insignificant, as he probably was and felt.

Next to the gracious, witty, and universally lion-

ized and adored Franklin, Webster was perhaps the most popular American visitor to London up to this time. He contributed much to the prestige of his country. Further and more important, he met and impressed a number of the leaders of English political thought, and their confidence and respect were factors in the crisis which was then slowly coming to a head in the opposed interests and excited animosities of the two nations.

Whatever his expectations as his own sales-agent for his Western lands, he seems to have done nothing in the matter while abroad. After all, why concern himself when he was temporarily rich on the benefice of the Blatchford syndicate? One stroke of business he did put through. He arranged to trade his Clamorgan tract shares at six hundred for United States Bank stock at par, with an American diplomat named Maxey. This was not the only visitation of bad luck suffered by Mr. Maxey; he was afterward blown up in the explosion of the naval gun, "Peacemaker." The haunting Websterian hoodoo attended the other side of the deal, as well. Within a year, the Bank closed its doors in utter collapse, and though Nicholas Biddle, who had previously retired, cast his own fortune into the breach, with a Quixotic sense of honor, the stockholders lost everything.

Refreshed and restored, though no better off for ready money than before, Daniel Webster returned to

Washington, and settled down to a program of watchfulness and patience. A message, sent before he left London, had set the wiseacres talking of a bargain between the two Whig leaders. The letter announced Webster's withdrawal from the field, in so far as the coming campaign was concerned, thus leaving Clay unopposed by any rival of importance. The terms, whispered the knowing ones, were as follows: Webster to support Clay, who would certainly be nominated, and should beat the fore-ordained Van Buren; Clay to pledge all the mechanism of administration patronage, after he was elected, to the promotion of Webster's Presidential interests, four years hence. Meantime the Massachusetts Thunderer could be Clay's Secretary of State, if he chose, or Senate administration leader if that rôle appealed more strongly to him. Such a private understanding alone, asserted the knowing ones, could explain the godlike Daniel's withdrawal.

It seems plausible. Political prescience was not our man's forte; he may have deemed 1840 a bad prospect for Whigs. Shortly after Van Buren's election, when a revulsion had set in, New York had temporarily gone Whig, and the Middle West had planned a record bonfire four thousand square miles in extent. The Grand Prairie, three hundred miles long and from ten to twenty miles wide, was to be set alight at Springfield, Ill., and "let her run," said the jubilant

incendiaries; but for some reason, possibly January weather, it failed to come off. Webster's friends made a practical application of the favorable indications, and, under the guidance of the banking and mercantile interests, secured a formal endorsement of his candidacy, in the Empire State. Meantime he had been wooing the West again, on a speech-making tour of quite emotional exuberance wherein he assured the entranced citizenry of St. Louis, Pittsburgh and other growing centers, that he had never set himself up for anything, and was one of the plain people.

Clay was indignant over the New York pronouncement, which he regarded as premature. Probably it was, as the State swung away from Webster later. The Kentuckian wrote a private letter protesting against the Webster recommendation as a threat to party harmony, and asked that his name be not then presented. As for his rival's success in the West, he pointed out that Mr. Webster's reception was a deserved tribute to his personality; they erred who mistook it for anything more significant. Here the Southerner's strategy was but another move in the great game—chess or poker, as you may choose—eternally at issue between those two. Presently he was so clearly in the lead that his nomination seemed assured. His party allegiance was wider and more steadfast than that enjoyed by Webster or any other Whig.

Two generals were in the background, the already

overwhelmingly defeated Harrison, and another minor hero, Scott. Going into the convention with the support of almost if not quite a majority of the delegates, including a practically solid South, Clay's friends expected prompt victory. Trading began between secret committees of the State delegations. The Scott supporters shifted to Harrison. The complexion of the gathering changed overnight, and "Old Tippecanoe" was nominated, with John Tyler of Virginia in second place as a sop to Clay and the South.

A sop was needed, for Clay raged and the rank and file of the party, whose idol he was, sulked. Upon receipt of the news from the Harrisburg Convention, he cursed Webster with a brilliancy and conviction which compelled the admiration of his group of listeners, blasé though they were to comminatory eloquence. Apparently he attributed to his rival a breach of the understanding, and some part in the deal with the Scott delegates which defeated him. His wrath cooled, and he and Webster drank punch together at an official reception, to the success of Harrison and his administration.

To the Massachusetts man, drink and prospect must have been of pleasanter savor than to the Kentuckian. Though he had an amused contempt for Harrison's intellectual attainments and political abilities, nevertheless Webster perceived that his own retarded advancement to the Presidential chair might well be for-

warded through this unforeseen nomination. He felt sure of Harrison's election. He judged—and in this he flattered himself—that the premiership of the Cabinet would be at once proffered to him.

He planned to accept it and from there to go onward and upward.

CHAPTER XVI

DANIEL TAKES A JOB

THEY jazzed Gen. William Henry Harrison into the Presidency. The avowed issues were corruption, the Bank of the United States, still hopeful of a charter in case of Whig success, and the spoils system: "Turn the rascals out." They figured little in the campaign. The real rallying points for the Harrison rooters were hard cider, log cabin and whoopee. Two defeats at the hands of Jackson, the capitalist of popularity (three, in fact, since Old Hickory had compassed the election of Van Buren), had taught his enemies a lesson. They would make appeal, on behalf of their candidate, to the hearts and sympathies of the common people.

Glee clubs ranged the land like *jongleurs*. Covert and Dodge, the Moody and Sankey duo of politics, thrilled their tens of thousands at mass meetings. The Tin Pan Alleys of the period ground out their songful grist: "Old Tip," "Up Salt River," "Buckeye Cabin," "Old Fort Meigs," "Tippecanoe Gathering," "Hero of the Thames," to slightly distorted adaptations of the Marseillaise, "Scots Wha Hae," "Rosin

the Bow," and the like. Frenetic young enthusiasts danced around Liberty poles, vociferating:

"What has caused this great commotion—motion—
motion
Our country through?
It is the ball a-rolling on
For Tippecanoe and Tyler, too,
For Tippecanoe and Tyler, too!
And with them we will beat Little Van.
Van—Van—Van
Is a used-up man.
And with them we will beat Little Van."

Propaganda built up the figure of the well-meaning, misty-minded and wealthy retired warrior into a rugged hero of the people. His symbols were the raccoon skin, the hard cider bottle, and the log cabin. For the campaign value of the last, Webster was responsible. Harrison's humble origins had been ridiculed; he was born in a plantation cabin, it was said. "We will make him the Log Cabin candidate," prescribed his defeated rival for the nomination, with a flair for the popular catchword unusual in him. He made a telling speech, descriptive of his visit to the frugal old patriot, content and simple in his log cabin, which was really a stately mansion on a large estate overlooking the Ohio River. Thenceforth the rude shack, with its hospitable hard cider barrel at the door, typified this old gentleman of rather elegant tastes, who lived extremely well and kept himself so satu-

rated in the classics that he knew little of what was going on about him. The emblem was blazoned on brass buttons, on tokens, on prints, and on the famous "hard-cider" whiskey bottles so highly prized by the addicts of that costly and incurable venery, flask collecting.

Against these torrential strategies, Martin Van Buren's more than respectable four years' record availed nothing.

"Maine went,
Hell-bent,
For Governor Kent,
For Tippecanoe
And Tyler, too,"

exulted the minstrels of Whiggery. Kentucky returns came in and were fittingly vocalized by the glee-singers.

"Have you heard from Old Kentuck
Tuck—tuck—tuck,
Good news and true?
Seventeen thousand is the tune,
For Tippecanoe and Tyler, too."

For once the Whigs had shaken off their impotency, reconciled their internecine hatreds, and united in a joyous and virulent hatred of the opposing leader which swept him back into private life.

General Harrison was President-elect. In all that goes to make a successful Chief Executive, he was of an appalling and virginal innocence.

Not much was expected of him. His was perhaps the most exclusively expedient of all the hero-elections to which the nation has always been prone and which have reacted so diversely upon its history. A vague, well-meaning, and high-principled man, extracting a natural satisfaction from his turbulent popularity, and expecting with a pleasant ingenuousness to maintain it, he was ready to be guided by his party advisers. Acquiescence was his cue. He was to be friendly to the Bank of the United States, smile upon internal improvements, turn out the old set of office-holders in favor of a new, go slow on the tariff, and avoid any irritant decisions on the subject of slavery. Webster and Clay could be trusted to take care of any troublesome situations. Nicholas Biddle, whose opinion is always entitled to respect, believed that his ancient stand-by would be the power behind the throne. "The coming administration will be, in fact, your administration," he wrote to Webster.

If Webster thought so himself, he was due for a temporary disappointment. To his Kentucky rival was made the first tender of the portfolio of State, which carried with it not only the lieutenancy of the administration but also the presumption of heritorship to the throne. Clay declined. Luck or foresight served him well—and served the nation also. He could never have handled as successfully as Webster, the specialist in international relations, the looming

complexities of the crisis with England. To Webster the President-elect now came with the Treasury in one hand and the State Department in the other, offering a choice.

There was no hesitancy. He took the State portfolio. Presumably this was what he had in mind, in communicating after the Harrisburg Convention, to a high Bank official, his determination to resign from the Senate:

> "And you can judge as well as I, perhaps, whether I shall thenceforward have anything to do with the government."

Unless he had believed, to use the formula of the prophetic Biddle, that the coming administration would be, in fact, his administration, he would hardly have entered it. Dangers which might check Clay would be less formidable to him. If any man in the United States was capable of holding his own against the overbearing diplomacy of England, it was he. As for his relation to his Chief, it was simple enough: a case of the wide-open-eyed leading the blind through a network of not too threatening difficulties.

It was the first time that he had ever accepted responsibility to an individual. Therein lay unpredictable perils.

Confidential relations were forecast when the President-to-be submitted to him his inaugural address.

Reading it, he must have wondered whether the author had not meant it for the Via Appia rather than Pennsylvania Avenue. It bristled with citations from ancient history. The scholar of "classic Dartmouth's college halls," himself so addicted to classicism that he used to appeal to friends to weed out the super-Latinity from his orations, now expunged, as he declares, seventeen Roman proconsuls from his Chief's message and still left enough to satisfy all reasonable requirements.

The opening days of the Harrison administration constituted for Daniel Webster one of those too rare periods in his life when every prospect pleases and man in the aggregate was by no means so vile as might be foreboded of the political nature of the creature. If he could bring to successful issue the boundary controversy, and meantime eradicate any unwise or superfluous projects that might sprout in the fertile but politically uncultivated soil of the General's mind, as he had weeded out the seventeen proconsuls from the message, he would be easily the dominant figure of the administration in public esteem. A reëstablished Bank would back him. Clay, do what he might in the Senate, would be relegated to a secondary position. Harrison was too old to succeed himself. The path would be clear.

Then the blow fell. A month and a day after his inauguration, the President died.

Instead of a program, Webster discovered that he had adopted a dilemma. Should he go or stay? A Harrison Presidency might be, in fact, Webster's administration; a Tyler Presidency certainly would not be. Whatever he might call himself, Tyler was a Democrat. His ideas and those of the Secretary of State were at issue on the tariff, slavery, States' rights, the admission of Texas now beginning to press, which meant an extension of slave territory and an augmentation of slavery votes, and the reëstablishment of the Bank of the United States. Dominant over all of these in Webster's sense of duty was the dangerous international status to the Northeast. He had enlisted under Harrison for the purpose of composing those differences. His Boston backers, fearful of a ruinous war, had urged this argument. Contemporary political observers believed that the $28,000 Blatchford fund was raised to persuade or to enable capital's foremost statesman to take the helm.

From Webster's viewpoint, the leader had changed, but not the cause. No one could have been more anxious than Tyler to see the diplomatic difficulties smoothed out. No one better appreciated the indispensable character of Webster's services in the matter. On this point, at least, the two minds met. There may have been politics in the *entente* between these factionally diverse spirits; there was a clear patriotism as well. Each honestly and ardently wished to serve

his country. It is a significant fact that even our worst, as well as our dullest Presidents—and Tyler is far from belonging in either category—have been patriotic, however partisan otherwise, in their attitude toward the responsibilities of the office.

The Eagle of the East consented to remain. His new leader was gratified. That he was confidential with his Chief of Staff is not so clear. The quiet Virginian had a way of thinking and planning for himself along lines of private purpose.

What a prickling of Clay's thumbs there must have been when he heard the news! So Dan Webster was going to stick. Nothing could better have suited the "Mill Boy's" book. He had refused the Cabinet premiership because he foresaw endless exasperations with so stupid a person as he judged Harrison to be. It was not in him to suffer fools gladly. But the astute Tyler was going to prove a more delicate problem for a Whig subordinate than his muddled military predecessor. Clay began to play chess.

He developed the Bank gambit. Having contributed lavishly to the anti-Van Buren campaign fund, the Bank of the United States group expected a return, in the form of a revival of the charter. It could be put through Congress. From the tractable Harrison there would be no fear of a veto. How Nicholas Biddle persuaded himself, or let others persuade him, that Tyler, who had resigned from the

Senate, quixotically as many thought, rather than follow his State's instructions to oppose Jackson on the issue, would now turn favorable, is dark. It was no concern of Clay's to undeceive him. Indeed, it would have demolished his strategy to do so. Clay needed Bank aid.

He knew that the Charter bill could be passed. He knew that Tyler would veto it. Then it would be Webster's move. Categorically committed as he was to the Bank by his seventy-odd public speeches as well as by private liaisons of which Clay was presumably cognizant, how could he reconcile a veto with continuance in the Tyler cabinet? He must resign. His prestige would be impaired. Clay's superior judgment in refusing an office which his rival eagerly accepted would be justified and he would once more be established as the leader of the party and its logical candidate to follow Tyler, who would certainly be read out of the ranks. Such was his reasoning.

He predicated accurately everything but his opponent's move, a slip to which any chess player is liable. The Bank bill passed with a proviso which provoked many a Congressional grin, forbidding loans to national legislators. Tyler vetoed it. It was resurrected in another form, only to encounter again the Presidential axe-stroke. A great and angry cry arose from the Bank party; the Cabinet could no longer with decency or dignity hold their positions under the rene-

gade Tyler. They must resign. They did resign, all but one. The Secretary of State held on.

At once he became the storm center. Charges were freely made that he had joined a general agreement of the Cabinet to resign in a body, only to trick his colleagues at the last moment. His friends and adherents were divided. Boston business thought he should stay. Mason, for whose judgment he had a profound respect, austerely refused to advise him, while warning him that adherence to Tyler would alienate many of his associates. John Quincy Adams counseled him to remain; Nicholas Biddle voiced no disapproval. What Clay really thought would be interesting, but is not of record.

Resorting to his familiar journalistic weapons, Webster retorted upon his critics anonymously. To one paper he furnished an attack upon his former colleagues, accusing them of unfairness and the betrayal of Cabinet secrets; to another a justification of Tyler's veto which was, in fact, a covert pre-defense of himself for retaining his office. He was nervous and unsettled over the whole affair. But the arguments of the financial interests, that the national safety demanded his official guardianship, a plea which his own conscience would confirm, prevailed with him. He would get the boundary controversy settled. After that it would be time to consider his resignation.

Tyler formed a new Cabinet which he hoped to infuse with a family feeling. It was a rickety structure, jerry-built out of second-hand material. He announced his expectation that each member would "look upon every other in the light of a friend and brother," a forecast of college fraternity spirit based upon hope rather than probability. The harsh realism of events failed to justify it.

The hold-over member kept away from his new friends and brothers as much as possible. He was absent from his desk, though not from his duties, to an extent which aroused unjustified criticism. At times his eldest son, Fletcher, had charge of the office and gave more offense than satisfaction. He seems to have been both ungracious and incapable. Daniel Webster was a fond and solicitous father; he was constantly concerned with securing positions for his first-born, which either came to nothing or were not long retained. Indications in letters between the two are that the son considerably added to the father's financial strain. He ran true to his blood in the matter of debt, and after his father's death pawned the massive five-foot chain of California gold, presented to the Great Defender by a group of New York admirers.

Personal troubles beset Webster. Ray Thomas, the Marshfield boy who had been his land-purchasing agent in the West, died, leaving his principal's affairs in some confusion. The banks were pressing.

"I enclose a blank for a new acceptance [he wrote one of the officials] but I do *beseech* the Directors not to subject me to a curtailment."

The collapse of the Bank of the United States of Philadelphia was a severe blow if, as I surmise, it was this stock for which he traded his Clamorgan Grant shares. Nicholas Biddle was thereby eliminated from financial power and hence from any dominant influence upon Webster's career. He retained his interest in politics, and sought to return to his early love, the diplomatic service. Characteristically he selected, not the most important, but the most aristocratic court in the world, and courteously advanced his claims before his friend, the Secretary of State. It seems ungracious in Webster to have refused him; presumably it was a case of political necessity. He accepted the rebuff with his usual well-bred amenity and continued to write his illustrious friend advice, much of it sound and shrewd.

The strain of Harrison's death and his own changed fortunes had worked upon Webster. He was tired and not very well. The chronic diarrhea weakened him. Hay fever distressed his sleep. He was drinking too much. Chancellor Kent's diary gives a brief presentation of him:

"Mr. Webster charmed the party. He is 57 years old and looks worn and furrowed; his

belly becomes protuberant, and his eyes deep in his head. He ate but little and drank wine freely."

Even oratory, with its thrill of subduing vast audiences to the spell of his superb histrionism, lost its savor for him. It became only an adjunct to practical politics. He was making fewer speeches; declining more invitations. This was the part of wisdom since he would soon need all his forces for the combat with his friends, the English. In the fall of 1841, threatened with a breakdown, he had fled to the refuge of his New Hampshire farm for a month. Ill and harassed by money complications he could not even here evade the relentless insistence of his duties.

"I seem born to ceaseless labor [he laments]. I have been obliged to be at my table seven or eight hours to-day.

A negligent, procrastinating and irresponsible legal representative he may have been at times (when the fish were biting or the birds flying); in the service of his country he was unsparing of self.

That country was shortly to call upon his best endeavors. A drunken and over-imaginative Scotch-Canadian, who had probably never heard Mr. Web-

ster's name, as Mr. Webster had certainly never heard that of Alexander McLeod, chanting his saga of battle, murder, and sudden death to admiring barroom audiences, brought himself to jail and two great nations to the brink of war.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MAN WHO TALKED TOO MUCH

ALL was now in readiness for the international achievement which should gain for Secretary of State Webster, the eternal gratitude of his country. He was to settle, on terms at once advantageous and permanent, the long-disputed question of the North-eastern boundary line between the United States and Canada. England had appointed as special representative Lord Ashburton, an augury of good will, since he was amiable, judicial, and the husband of a charming Philadelphia woman. He and Webster, who had commended himself to the sensible element of statesmanship and high society (an interchangeable term) on his English visit, could meet on common grounds of fairness, moderation, and mutual respect. The danger lay in the demands of the jingoes on both sides.

The facts in controversy were lost in a welter of contradictory maps. Furthermore, there was the complication of accessory questions relating to the fisheries and the unyielding claim of English naval men to the right of search on the high seas. Arbitration had been tried, with the King of the Netherlands for umpire. His decision brought the parties into unison on one

point. Both agreed that he was wrong. The disputing nations undertook to settle it between them. Everybody wanted to get the touchy question out of the way.

It is now necessary to go back a few years to a night when ex-Sheriff McLeod got drunk. Trouble had been, so to speak, home-brewing along the New York border of Canada without the official sanction of the government. A lot of mischievous, grown-up boys had got hold of some firearms and passwords, formed gangs and begun to play soldier. They called themselves Hunters' Lodges, Patriot Bands, Societies of Freedom and other robustious and jejune names. Annexation of Canada was their special form of make-believe. Nobody in the country of their design wanted to be annexed, except a few furtive malcontents. That did not diminish the ardor of the play-boys. They drilled their companies, stole a brace of cannon, took possession of an island, picked up an old craft called the *Caroline*, and exhibited symptoms of piracy.

Such, at least, was the natural interpretation put upon their actions by a watchful British commander who, when he judged the time propitious, led his force into American territory, dispersed the trouble-makers and sent their craft, in flames, over Niagara Falls. One life was lost, perhaps more: no one took much trouble to find out. Thus far the English could have made out a good case for themselves on the ground of

threat and provocation. But when the pacific Van Buren asked for an explanation, the British officials ignored him. Insolence was the keynote of John Bull's contemporary diplomacy. With such an important determination as the boundary dispute pending, the President was probably justified in swallowing the affront rather than pursue further a possible *casus belli*. Nevertheless, a citizen of the State of New York had been killed—murdered said the more inflammable—on New York soil, and something ought to be done about it. Threats subsided to mutual growlings from opposite sides of the river.

McLeod had gone (though not very far) with the *Caroline* raiders. Waking the next noon with one of those alcoholic hang-overs which stimulate the imagination to the recital of doughty deeds, he went extremely romantic and heroic. If one might believe his account, he had led the fray, spreading terror and slaughter about him. He was hailed as patriot and hero. Free drinks flowed. As time went on he embellished the tale. Whenever he got drunk he told it. It lasted through two years, gathering strength and flavor with time. Sometimes it was one, sometimes several of the damn Yanks that met a deserved fate at his hands. Echoes of his prowess drifted across the border. One day, he himself crossed, only to be arrested and clapped into jail. It was a poor ending to a good story, and a great shock to McLeod. The

bibulous and fabulous ex-sheriff, indicted for arson and murder, sent out doleful appeals to England to save his neck.

John Bull rose and thundered. Public meetings were held. The press rang with cries of defiance. The battle fleet was put in readiness to cross the Atlantic. If a hair of the martyr McLeod's head were touched, the United States should smart for it. The British minister, Fox, demanded McLeod's release. The *Caroline* was a "piratical steamboat" and her destruction by the invading force was "the public act of persons in Her Majesty's service." This would have been all very well three years before, when President Van Buren had asked for a definition of the status and been snubbed. It was now a little late.

This was the view taken by Gov. William H. Seward of New York. Seward was no jingo; quite the reverse. His was the habit of calm consideration and deliberate action. But he had a sturdy sense of the dignity of his office and his State. When Webster, alarmed at this new threat to the diplomatic *entente* which might well bring all his long and patriotic plans to nought, sent an emissary to Albany to see what could be done about releasing the accused man, the young Governor insisted that the trial must proceed. In the interests of peace, he undertook to pardon McLeod if convicted.

McLeod was satisfied. Whichever way the trial

went, his neck was safe and meantime he was enjoyably playing the lead in a drama that excited two nations. The British war-howlers were rabid at the indignity of permitting a Yankee court to try a subject of the Queen. The Americans began to get worked up over the threats of the British. It was in vain for President Tyler to admonish the Hunters' Lodges to be good. Armed forces were drilling along the frontier. Many exasperated patriots, among them Peter Porter of Niagara Falls, ex-Secretary of War, were for taking Fox at his word, accepting the tardy version that the British force had acted officially in the invasion of American territory, releasing McLeod, and peremptorily bidding England apologize or fight. General Scott was ordered to the frontier and got as far as Albany where he sprained his ankle. There were the makings of an embroilment far more serious than the languid affair of 1812.

The course of the Tyler administration seems to have been both devious and clumsy. Confronted with such a problem in criminal law, Webster, the justice-court attorney of an earlier period, would probably have investigated the merits of the case and saved a vast amount of trouble. But Webster, the Secretary of State, was viewing everything through the magnification of the interests involved. He took the unheard-of step of having the Federal government interpose and invade the province of the State government. Mc-

Leod was haled to New York City for a hearing before the Supreme Court, in spite of Seward's protest to Tyler that the State's honor was involved, and the remarkable spectacle was presented of a United States District Attorney appearing as counsel for an alien charged with the murder of an American citizen, though it was disingenuously asserted that he was not officially representing the State Department.

The attempt on Webster's part to "roll over upon us the weight of his great name and fame to smother me," as Seward resentfully characterized it, failed. The Supreme Court rejected the argument of the Federal attorney, refused to release McLeod, and sent him back for trial. There is in existence a long and curious letter, Webster to Seward, which the writer rather too conveniently forgot and half disclaimed in the course of controversy, gloomily prophesying that New York City would be laid in ashes by a British fleet unless McLeod were released. Seward thought and said that the course of the Government (as directed by Webster) toward him was unkind and ungenerous. He strongly hints that it was tricky. He bore no grudge, however, against Webster, whose abilities he warmly admired. Seward never bore grudges.

"It is," observes that inspired legal light, Michael Finsbury, "the unfortunate circumstance of guilt that hangs men." The simple and provable fact developed that the accused man spent the entire night of the

Caroline raid drunk and asleep in a house of shady repute, six miles from the scene of trouble and had not even heard of the affair until ten o'clock the next morning. Distressing though this lapse may be in a moral sense, it was internationally most fortunate. The alibi cleared up everything. The braggart and imaginative McLeod was acquitted, and history was spared the humiliating absurdity of two great nations going to war over something that never happened.

The way was now clear for a peaceful solution of the boundary problems. Nowhere has Webster risen to such sustained heights of statesmanship as in these negotiations. His letters to Ashburton were, "the poetry of diplomacy . . . unequaled in dignity and strength of composition," in the opinion of Charles Sumner who was himself both statesman and scholar. "Who excels, who equals Webster in intellect?" he cries, and he has his own half-humorous, half-serious explanation for it; it is owing to the vast bulk of the Secretary's head! "I can see that large head, like an immense battering-ram, behind every sentence."

Decrial and sneers from the Democratic press accompanied the course of the long procedure. Webster was a snob, a bootlicker of the British aristocracy; he had been seduced from his allegiance by the specious honors paid to him abroad and was a facile tool in the hands of the visiting scion of nobility. As

a matter of fact, the peer seems to have been impressed and managed by the splendid commoner, rather than *vice versa*. Each man honestly respected and trusted the other; their mutual liking outlasted the professional contact, and when the Secretary was charged with having been too lawyer-like in keeping private certain data, his opponent came forward, like a sportsman, to clear his reputation.

Danger of war from the McLeod fiasco was over, but there were still many Americans who felt that the dignity of their country had suffered at the hands of insolent British diplomacy. Tyler probably held this view, and not the least difficult of Webster's correlative tasks was to elicit some expression from the British emissary of an apologetic, or at least conciliatory, character. It is said that the American kept the nobleman up all night on this point. Apologize categorically on behalf of his nation, Ashburton would not. But he did go on record as regretting that an apology and explanation had not been made at the time of the raid. Any one who thinks that this was no considerable concession to have extracted from a representative of John Bull, is respectfully referred to a study of England's diplomatic manners and methods in the first half of the Nineteenth Century, as embodied in her official correspondence. I think it safe to say that no representative of our government, not even Franklin, ever exhibited more dignity, determination, and

sagacity on behalf of the nation than Daniel Webster in his dealings with Lord Ashburton.

Not that he won all the points at dispute, by any means. The boundary line itself was, on the whole, an equitable adjustment, with the advantage, if anything, in our favor. But an explicit abandonment of the right of search on the sea, that high-handed persecution of our shipping, he could not secure. To the eye of the sportive British naval man, the American sailor was still a species of aquatic game. Webster served notice, however, in words refreshingly free of diplomatic ambiguity. "The practice of impressing seamen from American vessels," he informed the self-constituted Ruler of the Waves, per her official emissary, "cannot hereafter be allowed to take place," and he added for good measure the unequivocal doctrine that "In every regularly documented American merchant vessel, the crew who navigate it will find their protection in the flag which is over them." Ten years later he showed himself ready to make good that warning by force of arms.

Super-patriots on both sides were disgruntled over the settlement. They always are. The British jingo press lamented "Ashburton's capitulation." Yankee blatancy decried "Webster's surrender." Such jeremiad terms as "national disgrace," "shame," "miscarriage," "abandonment of principle," "collusion," and "betrayal," were divided about fifty-fifty between

the hundred-percenters on either side of the ocean, a mathematically perfect equation. It availed little against underlying sober sense and relief over a crisis avoided. The result stood. When the Senate ratified the treaty by a majority which constituted a tribute to statesmanship, Daniel Webster's most valuable and laborious service to his country was consummated.

On taking office he had foreseen the difficulties, the perils and the immense labor involved in the boundary dispute. What he did not and could not foresee was another diplomatic complication with little glory to compensate for its danger to his career. Negro slaves, being transported to market on the brig *Creole*, mutinied, killed their owner, took possession of the craft, and put in at the British island of Nassau. Nineteen of them were arrested for murder, and the rest of the one hundred and thirty-eight set free. Instantly there was a furore in the Slave States. American property had been seized, American rights violated. What was the Government going to do about it? The answer must come from the pen of Secretary of State Daniel Webster.

For him this event was doubly unfortunate. Not only was it likely further to embroil the two nations and add another issue to the troublous accumulation of moot questions connected with the boundary treaty, but it compelled him to take a definite stand on the topic of slavery.

Now Webster, as he increased in power, influence, statesmanship and ambition, tended more and more to a policy of quietism. Perhaps this is an inevitable concomitant of high political hopes. A tenet of his philosophy was: "Some questions will improve by keeping." Slavery was in this category. He preferred inaction, procrastination, a pacific, though never a neutral, attitude. His spirit was at war with itself on the subject. Slavery as a form of human injustice and oppression he hated with the emotional conviction of an inherently humane man. All his utterances had been in opposition to it. He was pledged to fight its extension.

But slavery as an institution rested upon quite another basis. The Constitution made it sacrosanct. As the Upholder of the Constitution, as the proponent of the theory that the protection of property is a major concern of government, he was committed to its defense. With the slave as an individual he could feel the most poignant sympathy, as many high-minded Southerners—Clay, for example—did; but the slave as a vested interest, recognized as such by the Constitution of the United States, must and should be maintained in that status. To put it in another form, while his emotions revolted from "the wild and guilty phantasy that man can hold property in man," his every professional instinct and Constitutional conviction was pro-Slavery.

This being the case, his best hope was avoidance of the question. It was, so he tried to convince himself, a minor issue. He was deliberately blind to the rising flames, fanned by a passionate moral revulsion and spread by the oil of a fanaticism as reckless, as righteous, and as destructive as only moral convictions under the lash of persecution can be. No analyst of history, he failed to recognize the implication inherent in the fact that the rest of the civilized world had eliminated the blight. Even when, later, the irreconcilable difference was being driven like a wedge into the living body of the nation, he plaintively protested that it was less important than the tariff and other moot decisions. Now he was face to face with a situation where he must deal with it concretely and positively. It was a malignant stroke of fortune.

He met it squarely, and in the only way proper to an official representing American sovereignty and American rights. He called upon Great Britain for restitution. Perhaps he went further than necessary in his characterization of the risen slaves, whose arrest and return he demanded as mutineers and murderers. But his main contention was that of inevitable logic. Many years later an arbitration commission justified his contention by assessing an indemnity of $110,000 against Great Britain.

A great and shocked cry went up from the anti-Slavery ranks. They had, by a complete though per-

haps natural misinterpretation of Webster's legalistic mind, expected him to acquiesce in the high-handed procedure of the British authorities. To them his course was an exhibition of knuckling subservience to the necessities of office-holding. His Chief was a slave-state President; his colleagues Southerners; he had permitted his principles to be overborne by his ambitions. John Quincy Adams in his evening diary reflected with acid philosophy: "Such is human nature in the gigantic intellect, the ravenous ambition, and the rotten heart of Daniel Webster." Sumner dates the statesman's "morally unsound and pernicious doctrine" from this episode. The Abolitionist press alternately mourned and flayed him. His neighbors at Plymouth, some of whom had heard his fiery invective against the manufacture of slave-shackles, pledged themselves not to support any war to protect property in human beings, and sent him a copy of the resolution. His mail was full of protests.

Yet what else could he have done, other than what he did do? Only resign.

In the course of the boundary campaign, he had felt it necessary to conciliate public opinion in Maine. It would be a good idea, he thought, to enlist the support of the local press. For this purpose he asked Tyler to permit him to draw moneys direct from the secret service fund, on his own authority instead of through the bothersome intermediary of petty clerical

officials. The President acceded, but possibly feeling some uncertainty as to the Websterian arithmetic, he provided that he himself should be covered by signed statements for all money thus requisitioned.

The Secretary of State drew $17,000 on this system. When he came to reckon up his figures, he found himself between two and three thousand dollars short. This was no new thing, though he never before had dealt with Government cash. He put it out of mind, in the righteous consciousness of a job well done.

CHAPTER XVIII

A CABINET OFFICER'S BUSY DAY

ON a bench in Lafayette Square, an oldish, massively built man breathed the noonday warmth, and dozed. A squirrel considered him, then overran his paunch, nosing into his pockets for bits of cracker. A stray dog approached, sending the gray prowler, chittering with wrath, into a tree. The dog sniffed at the sleeper and wagged his tail. He smelled friendly. Two men crossing the open space paused.

"Is not that Mr. Secretary Webster?"

"Surely. Where in Washington is another such hat?"

"A great man."

"None greater. I should not like to be in his shoes."

"Will he resign, in your opinion?"

"Why should he remain where he no longer wields any influence?"

"The Whig Gulliver, mocked by the Tyler Lilliputians. He will find a warm welcome at home."

"Too warm. The Whig newspapers are lamming him into fits in every issue."

The man on the bench stirred. His great hat

toppled from a dome like that of the Capitol. He roused himself, blinked, sighed wearily and returned with heavy dignity the respectful salutation of the two men, one of whom hastened to restore his beaver. Back of him was his house where he had just lunched, the over-large Swann mansion. "Lonely and almost lost in so many rooms," he had written his wife. Now Caroline had come back and they were giving a great party to all Washington that evening. "The Secretary of State entertains." A tedious business, but one had to do that sort of thing.

How long would he continue to be Secretary of State? Nicholas Biddle thought that he ought to remain. An able, far-sighted man, Mr. Biddle. What a pity that he should have involved his own fortune in the effort to save the Philadelphia bank, though no longer even in the directorate! But Biddle did not seem to understand the exasperations, the mortifications of his position as the nominal head of a Cabinet all of whose members were hostile and some of whom were contemptuous in their attitude toward him. He had given the banker an inkling of his humiliating impotency when he wrote that, since the Whigs had become alienated from President Tyler, he himself was in no position to ask anything of the administration. The President was always courteous, always considerate. But he was more aloof than formerly. They had so little in common.

Every day that he remained weakened his position in the party. Clay, in the Senate, was playing the D—l with him. If anything could goad him to profanity, it would be Clay. Yet you couldn't help liking the fellow. There was something about him . . . Who was it that had said of him: "I wouldn't trust the rascal with sixpence. He is unfit for the association of decent men. I'd cross a muddy street to avoid meeting him. But damn him, I love him"? What was the secret of that magic and irresistible attraction? Memo: to look up for future use those documents showing that Clay was ready to abandon protection. That, if it could be proven, would do him no good in New England. He was certainly angling for New England's votes, even in Massachusetts, his, Webster's, own State. They were bitter there against their favorite son. Let them wait until he came back. He would read them a lesson.

But—resign? If he did, what was his next step? The Senate again? Could he afford it? His income had dwindled under the pressure of his official duties. And those Western lands from which he had expected so much were not appreciating in value. Had Fletcher been misled? Poor Fletcher! He, too, was pursued by the Webster ill-luck. He did not seem to get along with people. As long as the Cabinet position was retained, it was simple to look after him, and he was company in that large and lonesome house. But he

was a problem . . . Secretary Webster rose ponderously and went on his way.

At his office there was the usual press of visitors, seeking appointments, asking favors; the overflow pile of unread mail from office-hunters. One never seemed to get to the bottom of it. And there would be the interminable duns; the notes to be met; the bloodletting interest to be paid; the mounting wave of debt. . . . A Secretary of State with Presidential expectations could not invoke the bankruptcy law; not even though it was his own law! . . . He must write to Franklin Haven about the sub-Treasury plans. And Samuel Frothingham would expect private advance information as to the British negotiations. Mr. Jaudon, too, wished him to use his special opportunities to let him know about the tariff outlook. One must keep in the good graces of these men. But there was a sure payment exacted for their favors. If only he could secure his own financial independence!

"Dr. Ruggles calling to see you, Mr. Secretary."

That was a relief. Ruggles would not talk politics, and he would not press for money. He would chat about matters at home, tell a good story or two, perhaps have some news from Marshfield. Ah, Marshfield and the sea! the sea! If he resigned, he could at least satisfy that deep hunger of the heart. He welcomed his caller with dignified warmth. Yes indeed he could spare five minutes, ten, fifteen. It seemed

not half of that when the genial visitor from home withdrew.

"Come down to Washington often," the great man adjured him, shaking hands. "You make me feel young again. I want none of your short-legged, sixty-day fellows about me with their three-days grace."

A note was brought in from the President. Would Mr. Webster kindly call a Cabinet meeting for ten o'clock on the following morning? Wearily, the Secretary of State arranged to have the notices sent out. He wished that he could be anywhere except at that meeting. Accustomed to dominate any gathering at which he was present (unless it was the Senate and Clay or Benton were on hand), he chafed under the unaccustomed sense of diminution. He was little more than a figurehead at these convocations. And among such pigmies! McLean, Upshur, Legaré, Forward, Spencer—who were they? Yet they often practically ignored what he said, or hardly veiled their indifference to his opinions beneath the pretenses of official courtesy. Upshur had dared so far as to interrupt him. Him, Daniel Webster!

He was very sleepy. He had been up since four-thirty, reading, arranging his legal papers, writing some letters. That was rather a fine description which he had indited, of the fishing trip to the Falls of the Potomac, and the scenery along the banks. He should have remembered to put in that couplet of the un-

equaled Denham, beginning: "Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull." He had meant and then postponed writing to Sarah Goodridge. Poor little lady! He must contrive to find some money for her, or at least, some clients. Miniature painting could hardly be a remunerative occupation at best. He would write and promise to see what could be done. But first he would go home and take a nap. A deputation to see him? With a petition, doubtless, signed by five hundred leading citizens of Memphis or Trenton or Detroit asking that some esteemed fellow-citizen with weak lungs be appointed consul at Barbados, Port of Spain, or some equally healing spot.

No? A business deputation? He would receive them. He listened to their proposal. It was sound; a company to take up and improve land in a section soon to be opened up by one of the new canals. But it required money. And of cash he was totally blank.

"Gentlemen: I can but say to you this, as I have said to others. If you have any projects for money-making, I pray you keep me out of them; my singular destiny mars everything of that sort and would be sure to overwhelm your own better fortunes."

So they departed and with them went another possible fulfillment of the hope, long deferred (since 1813), of being made rich.

Should he call a coach and ride home? No; per-

haps he would better stop in at the President's House. Mr. Tyler appreciated these official courtesies. Sometimes, too, one could pick up bits of official information susceptible of being turned to political or financial account by one's good friends in Boston or New York. Not as often as formerly, however. The President, courteous as ever, was more and more keeping his own counsel from his Chief of Staff.

"Good afternoon to you, Mr. President."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. I trust your health improves."

"I suffer from interrupted sleep," returned the visitor, panting a little, for his asthma had come upon him. "It would be desirable, in my opinion, Mr. President, to take up the matter of the Mexican claims, soon. They should be pressed for."

But the President did not wish to talk of the Mexican claims. He seemed concerned only with minutiæ: appointments, removals, substitutions, docket details. The Secretary must swallow his disappointment. He held a quantity of that Mexican scrip which he had secured at a bargain. Clients of his held much more. If Mexico could be brought to toe the line, it would be profitable, both directly and indirectly, to him. The matter had hung fire too long; he could not even borrow on the scrip in the present status.

Gaining no satisfaction there, he touched upon the subject of Texas. As a Southerner, devoted to the

cause of Slavery, Tyler would naturally desire the annexation of the region; it would be pro-Slavery territory and mean pro-Slavery votes. That would be bad, very bad. The last thing he himself wished was to see increased Southern representation in Congress. Mr. Tyler was not responsive about Texas, either. If only he knew definitely Tyler's plans. By resigning and returning to the Senate he believed that he could beat the annexation scheme. But the President was not showing his cards. Others of his Cabinet might be in his confidence; the head of it was not.

Feeling frustrated and uncertain, the Secretary of State took his leave. He would walk home and ponder the situation as he went. *Solvitur ambulando.*

A gentleman stopped him and solicited the privilege of presenting his wife.

"My dear, this is the great Defender of the Constitution."

"Sir, would that I might have had the honor of hearing that magnificent reply to General Hayne which I have so often read."

Mr. Webster's hat came off; he performed his stateliest bow. "Madam, and sir: When I speak of the Constitution, I feel a burning zeal which prompts me to pour out my whole heart. It is the nearest approach of mortal to supreme wisdom, the last hope of liberty among men."

He made another bow and passed on, refreshed in

spirit and conscious of having spoken the happy and fit word.

Home was a confusion of caterers, decorators, florists, and servants. He sought refuge in the top story. On the wall hung a rough sketch of the house at Marshfield. He had not written there for a week nor heard from there since a fortnight. Before he could sleep he must discharge his mind of that duty. He sat down to write a letter to Seth Weston, covering all the points that he could call to mind. That new stallion must be carefully handled. How had the second-prize cow ever been allowed to entangle herself in wire? The wound must be washed daily in salt water and vinegar. For the lawn, dead fish, by all means; nothing else so good, and the visiting ladies might hold their delicate noses or bear off to windward. The price of pigs was gratifying; it might go still higher. Don't forget, this year, to cut ice early. November ice always outlasts the crop of any other month. Let the salt meadows alone; salt hay is poor fodder at best. Mr. Healy will find the money for next month. And do not neglect to write at least once a week.

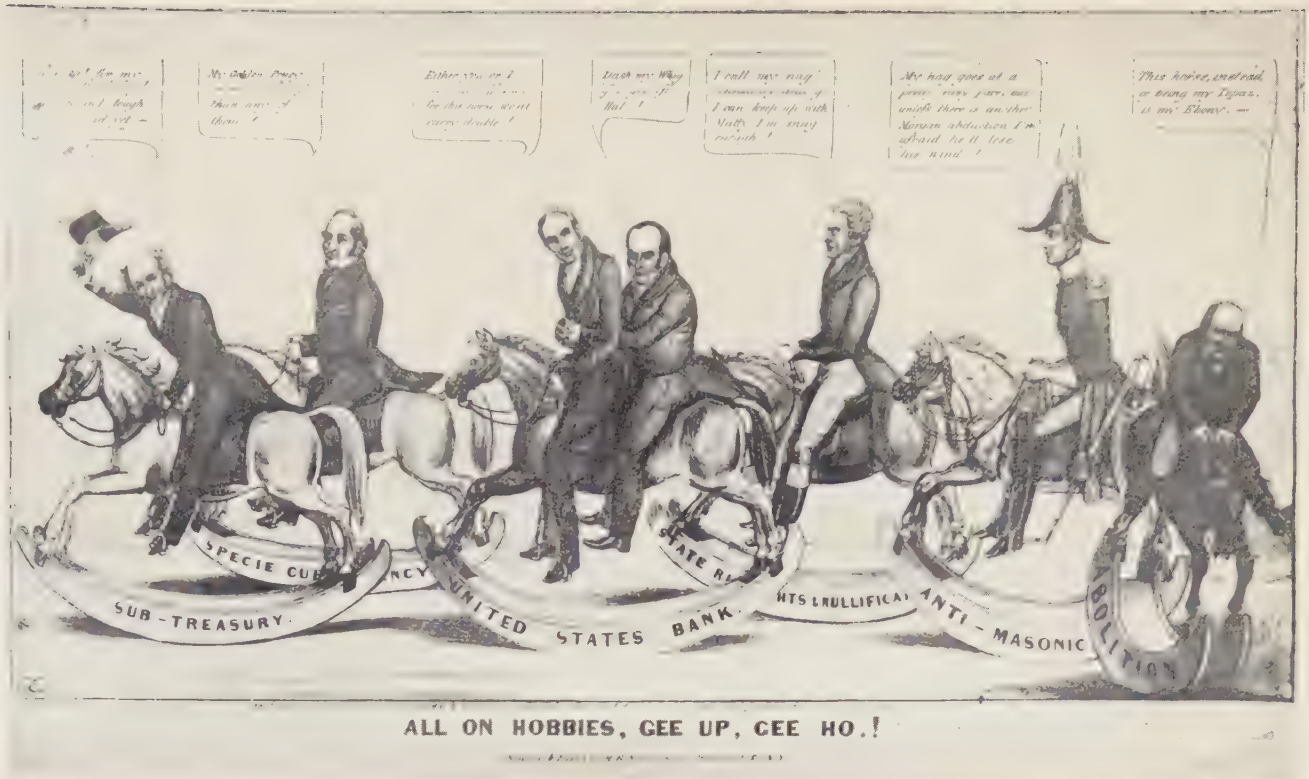
It ran to the better part of an hour, that missive. Little enough to spend on Marshfield. Now he remembered that the evening's bowl was awaiting his expert ministration. He could prescribe exact proportions to an underling, but the skilled palates of his

friends discovered (so they kindly said) that Daniel Webster punch never had quite so rich a flavor and satisfactory a result as when compounded by the inventor's hand. When the mixing was completed, and he had swallowed a sample or two, and conferred with Caroline as to details, his nap was cut down to forty-five minutes. It did him much good. Mr. Webster enjoyed great powers of recuperation.

The Webster party was by no means the most brilliant event of the season, but it was one of the most impressive. The younger element found it lacking in that there was no dancing and no music. But there was plenty for all of that new and delicious confection known as ice cream, which was the gastronomic sensation of the era and made the fortune of the caterer who first surprised the palates of officialdom with its bland flavor. And the punch had never been better.

All the local retailers of gossip were agog to pick up some hint as to the question most rife in Washington, which had ceased to take the form of "Is Mr. Secretary Webster going to resign?" and had become "When is Mr. Secretary Webster going to resign?" They gleaned no satisfaction from the impassive and dignified bearing of their host. Never had he appeared more urbane; never more at peace with himself and the world. Daniel Webster was not one to wear his restless and ambitious heart on his coat-sleeve.

From group to group he moved, ponderous and



Warming Up for the Presidential Race

From the "broadside" published in 1838 by H. R. Robinson.

(*Courtesy of American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.*)

benign, pausing here to answer a question, there to tell a story, again to pay an austere compliment to some fair official lady. One small and close cluster, gathered around a spirited débutante who was narrating an incident, spread as the host appeared. He begged the fair narrator to proceed. She explained, after a reluctance which threatened to become awkward, that she had just heard of an incident at Governor Seward's mansion in Auburn, N. Y., where ex-President Adams was visiting. A guest asked him whether he did not think slavery would be peacefully and legally abolished in the natural processes of time. Mr. Adams answered with more animation than usual:

"I used to think so, but I do not now. I am satisfied that it will not go down until it goes down in blood."

Mr. Webster's face darkened. "The subject is one," he pronounced, "of which we may say 'Least said, soonest mended.' "

Some one hastily produced a curio in the form of a newspaper clipping from New York purporting to contain "chemical advice." The advice was "how to produce combustion in hay without detection." Another apostle of tact described the thrilling scene in Albany when four thousand Irishmen, under the inspiration of Father Matthew, had marched in columns to sign the pledge.

"The prediction was even made," said the speaker,

"that one day the sale and use of liquor will be forbidden throughout the United States."

There was general laughter which increased when Tom Corwin, the Senate wit, asked, "Are we to turn Mahometan, then?"

Mr. Webster joined in the laughter, but his spirits were dimmed, as he passed on. That accursed and perilous subject of slavery was cropping up everywhere. Fanatics like Sumner had tried to link Abolition to the principle of Union, a vicious heresy. The Abolitionists were as reckless and dangerous as the Southern Nullificationists. It was no topic for idle conversation. The wise and patriotic kept silent on it. A bad business only to be worsened by irresponsible chatter. He wanted no more of it in his house.

"Will you join us in a rubber, Mr. Secretary?"

The rear rooms had been set aside for cards. Mr. Webster could see no reason for declining. The party was going under its own momentum. A rubber would rest him. He played for an hour. Between hands, he heard outside the door a querulous, shaky voice.

"Where is Dan'l? I haven't seen Dan'l this evening."

It was old Mr. Healy, a distant cousin of his. A woman's voice replied: "He is inside, playing cards."

"Playing *cards?*. Gambling?"

"Why, I suppose, Father, they are playing for a stake."

"Gambling?" reiterated the shrill voice, poignant now with protest. "Daniel Webster gambling? A man gambles only with his equals. Where can Daniel Webster find equals with whom to gamble?"

Smiling, the great man went out to shake the hand of his ancient admirer. After the guests were gone and he was in bed, he thought pleasurably of the episode. He had not lost his hold upon the public mind. There were still those who saw him, pedestaled above the stature of other men, the unequaled statesman, the godlike Daniel.

CHAPTER XIX

A LITTLE HARD TO COAX

THAT spirit of brotherhood, which President Tyler so touchingly invoked for his official family, signally failed to include the Secretary of State. He had been uncomfortable in his alien environment since Tyler had infuriated the Whigs by vetoing the Bank bills. Now his dignity was threatened. A Daniel Webster, reduced to the status of an ornamental nonentity, is in danger of becoming a laughing stock. The Eagle of the East had no taste for being a figurehead.

If he was to jump out of the frying-pan, he must take some measures to allay the flames of the waiting fire. That Clay was fanning them, he had no doubt. His bold decision to remain in the Cabinet had disappointed his crony's strategy for the time, but it had also afforded that chess-master an opening for another of his oblique moves toward nomination to the Presidency. The Massachusetts Whigs had declared "a full and final separation from the President of the United States"; that was presumably one of the Clay moves. "Do they mean to say that I am no longer a Massachusetts Whig?" demanded Webster of a friend, angrily.

The danger was growing that the Kentuckian would supplant the Bostonian in his own home State. This decided Webster on his procedure. Massachusetts was the place for him to meet the issue and fight it out before his party. Otherwise he would presently have no party. His friends planned a testimonial dinner. He wisely preferred the broader scope of a public meeting. So the Boston "welcome" was arranged. It was, in reality, a trial for his political life.

The Faneuil Hall speech is not the greatest of Webster's achievements, but as an exhibition of sheer gallantry, it is unequaled in his and unsurpassed in any American's forensic career. State Street and the politico-financial backers had organized the occasion; they could not pack it. There was too much disaffection in the party.

On his way to the appointment, the speaker of the evening met his old friend, Jeremiah Mason.

"Well, Webster, are you going down to Faneuil Hall to encounter that mob?"

"Yes, Mr. Mason, I am. Will you walk?"

They found at the Hall a crowded audience; if not openly hostile, at best disgruntled and sullen. The Great Defender was, for the first time, publicly on the defensive. The party awaited his explanation, his excuses, his apology.

Webster was as apologetic as a wounded lion, or less

so. As soon as the applause, led and sustained by a claque of fugleman, had died down, he began.

"Webster looked like Coriolanus," reports Charles Sumner who was there. "He seemed to scorn while he addressed the people. When he came to speak of Clay's favorite measure, the [tariff] compromise bill, he drew from the bitterest fountains."

Straight to the point went the orator. "I am a little hard to coax, gentlemen, but as for compulsion, that is out of the question." And this was suavity to what followed.

"Resign!" shouted a voice.

Leaning forward, his hands stiffly held, his voice deep and heavy, his somber eyes raking the unresponsive faces, he stated his position. "I give no pledges; I make no intimation, one way or the other, and I will be as free when this day closes to act as duty calls as I was when the dawn of this day broke . . . A public man has no occasion to be embarrassed if he is honest. Himself, as his feelings, should be to him as nobody and as nothing; the interest of his country must be to him as everything. . . . I have no attachment to office. I have tasted of its sweets, but I have tasted of its bitterness. I am content with what I have achieved." Take it or leave it, Whigs of Massachusetts! And they took it and acknowledged his mastery in a riot of cheering. Courage had won the day.

The Faneuil Hall speech justified Webster's

friends, discomfited his enemies and frustrated Clay's strategic designs upon the State. The Massachusetts Thunderer was once more the leader of his party in New England; he never again would be, in the old, complete sense, its idol.

Too much bitterness had eructated into the mouths of the Whigs when they came to digest the argument. Their man had vouched for the party regularity of Tyler. But—*quis custos custodiat?* Who would vouch for the party regularity of the voucher? The Whig papers harped on the question. They could not forget Webster's attempted justification of the Bank bill vetoes, an amazing change of front. The Abolitionists were angry, and the moderate anti-Slavery element suspicious. Was New England's champion being seduced by the influence of his Southern colleagues? Sectional feeling was involved. Only by withdrawing wholly from the administration could he purge himself of the taint of these associations.

What had he to gain by staying? Many times he must have asked himself this anxious question when the negotiations with Lord Ashburton were nearing a successful end. Being a President without a party, Tyler certainly could not bequeath the nomination to his Chief of Staff. The chances were better from without than from within. Webster had served notice on the Whigs that he was not to be bullied; his record was clear on that point. With the boundary question

settled, he could retire gracefully, bearing the honors of one who had deserved well of his country. He did so. Tyler accepted his resignation with polite alacrity and suitable expressions of a regret which he did not feel.

"Homeward to Boston, Webster hies to breathe" once more. But the incense of adoration was a thinning cloud. A visitor, calling upon him in his law office, found him "talking about his farm with composure. He is referred to now as a man of immense talents, but not particularly, etc., etc. So it is to be eclipsed!"

If eclipse it were, it was but temporary. The completion of the Bunker Hill monument came pat to his occasion. He was, of course, the logical, almost the inevitable orator for that day, not only by virtue of his eminence in that field, but also because of his former famous address at the laying of the corner-stone. When the invitation was first broached he had been reluctant, for reasons more practical than patriotic; he could see nothing in it for Daniel Webster. He doubted "the utility of the meeting." To Robert Winthrop he wrote:

> "The substance of the whole must be procession and parade. And what good will these do? They may gratify the love of splendid show, but will they give me any votes? I think not."

The Whig State Convention had endorsed Clay for 1844; a stunning blow. Since then the situation had changed. Webster needed a rostrum upon which to present himself as the loyal representative, the favorite son, the true type of all that was best in New England statesmanship.

This second Bunker Hill oration, with its clarion patriotism, went far to reëstablish his magnetic control and revive his imperiled leadership.

Taking stock of his chances for the nomination in 1844, he could now see only Henry Clay as a serious rival. And he hoped to keep "Harry of the West" from making any further inroads in his own home territory.

Now that he was free of administration entanglements, he felt that the Whig leaders and newspapers would come back to him. The propertied classes were for him. The manufacturers regarded him as their firmest supporter. All over the country the conservative-minded looked to him. He had patented the Constitution, politically speaking, and was entitled to all its emoluments. The Bank of the United States, having (as Seward observed) overthrown both parties and so ruined itself, was but an unlaid ghost, but the financial powers of which it was the implement, were still potent and recognizant of his services. Sinews of war would not be wanting.

In these early Forties Webster was drinking immod-

erately. In part this was response to the demand for a stimulus to keep him going. His stomach was bad, his asthma exhausting, and in the train of these came rheumatism. The excesses were ill-timed; he fortified himself for his public appearances. Sly digs in the newspapers annoyed him. To be dubbed "Thane of Chowder" was harmless enough: not all the references were so innocuous. "I suppose they will say I was drunk again," he commented bitterly, when he fell from sheer exhaustion after a particularly trying speech.

"They" said that he was drunk at Patchogue, Long Island, when he boasted that he could have crushed the Jackson administration at will. "I could have done it in a single hour." Whether the charge of inebriety is true, it is difficult to reconcile a wholly sober Webster with such utterances as these:

> "All the papers favorable to the administration will say: 'Don't believe Webster, that old aristocrat; he never tells the truth; he's an aristocrat, and you can't believe anything that he says. . . . Echo will tell in a thousand ways that Mr. Webster is a sad old aristocrat and knows nothing of democracy. . . .' The man that says I am an aristocrat is a liar. The man that will not meet me fairly with argument and uses idle and obscure declamation instead, then will not come within reach of my arm, is not only a liar but a coward."

As a widely famous and enthusiastic farmer, he was invited to be guest of honor at the Agricultural Fair in Rochester and there made his famous "Waterfall" speech, which has come dashing down the ages without (as far as I am aware) the adventitious aid of type.* A committee had taken him, after a liberal luncheon, to view the magnificent Falls of the Genesee, which so impressed him that he totally ignored his afternoon engagement at the Fair Grounds, pleading indisposition, but compensated for it at the evening banquet where he was down for one speech but made three. (Or possibly four: the record is a trifle confused.) After casting defiance in the teeth of "the proud monarchies of Europe" ("We are not your slaves; we are not paupers; we will not be your debtors; we will pay") and offering to throw his own financial resources into the scale (applause, and laughter), he made his bounteous contribution to local pride:

> "Babylon had her hanging gardens, but, gentlemen, she never had a waterfall, one hundred and fifty feet high. Egypt boasted her pyramids and her Cleopatra; but did she own a waterfall one hundred and fifty feet high? Greece had her Parthenon, Rome her Coliseum, but neither of them could show a waterfall one hundred and

* There is a feeble and attenuated reference, a thin, single-barreled echo in the official version of his address, dealing with a hypothetical waterfall in the Thames.

fifty feet high. Ah, gentlemen, that nation shall never be enslaved which possesses a waterfall one hundred and fifty feet high."

Webster afterward explained this lofty flight into the realms of comparative geography. In some undetermined manner there had been substituted for the forensic glass of water at his elbow, a tumbler of brandy. Unaware of the change, he swallowed the contents, in a pause in his speech, and instantly felt the effects. "I hope there was no evil intention," he comments darkly. The result, if startling, could not have been permanent, for Seward who sat next him testifies that the guest of honor made "one of his great and overpowering speeches." He does not specify which one.

Drink always stimulated Webster's instincts of generosity. It was on another convivial occasion that, animadverting upon the national debt and the necessity of clearing it off, he paused and plunged his hand into his pocket. "How much is it? I'll pay it myself."

On the record he seems to have been in no state to pay anything. The *Globe* stated that "Mr. Webster's notes of hand not long ago were sold in the market for not more than $10 on the hundred," which, true or not, was no help to his credit. Not only was he performing his familiar feats of tight-rope walking be-

tween the banks, but his private debts were more harassing than ever. His niece was demanding her share of an unsettled family estate. "So far as anything remains due from me, it shall be paid immediately," he promised. One, Upton, son of an old friend whom Webster had aided in his hour of need, was pressing a claim of his dead father's estate and threatening publicity if it were not satisfied. The unhappy debtor did not deny the claim; he simply professed himself helpless to do anything about it. He was fast approaching the condition where he likened himself to "a keg, soon emptied if tapped at both ends and then turned over and the bung knocked out."

Once more and most reluctantly he must go back to "carrying the green bag," emblem of his slavery to the law-grind. Important cases crowded in upon him. The Girard will case was the biggest. He had lost that, though through no fault of his own. He was conscious of having made a splendid effort for God, Bible, and religion against that atheistic testament which excluded all ministers of the gospel from the conduct of the college. But, inexplicably, the court showed itself concerned exclusively with the law. Not like the good old days of the Dartmouth case: "It is, sir, a small college, yet there are those who love it"; and stern Marshall's face, seamy with emotion. Could it be that forensic eloquence was losing its potency with the courts?

Politics had disappointed him again. The Tyler label made Webster's candidacy hopeless. Only his own State, wrested by cavalry methods from his Kentucky rival, stood by him in the convention with a complimentary vote. Clay carried the field and it looked as if, this time, he would carry the election. "Who the devil is Polk?" asked the bewildered Democrats of each other, after nominating that inconspicuous politician. But they rallied enough votes to him to beat the Mill Boy of the slashes again.

Competent observers noted that the Massachusetts Giant did not impair his health by overexertion in his fellow-Whig's behalf. Nor was he grief stricken at the result. It is the high spirit of resolve rather than the low spirits of disappointment which informs the speech delivered after the news of defeat came in. "What if the field be lost? All is not lost."

Indeed, all was not lost, for him. Quite the reverse. He was in better case than if his rival in the party had won. Massachusetts, ever faithful, wanted him back in the Senate. There he would naturally assume the leadership of the Opposition, and by his services wipe out the taint of Tylerism. Money was the stumbling block. He held back, appeared reluctant, suggested canvassing the state for a substitute who should be "true and firm in the assertion of Northern rights against the domination of the slave trade."

Nobody could be found to measure up to the requirements. Webster or nothing! The demand swelled to an overwhelming wave of recovered popularity. So be it, then; he would accept the dictum of the party at the sacrifice of his own personal interests. By what preliminary interplay of financial and political amenities we may never know, an understanding was reached. The Illustrious Daniel would be taken care of satisfactorily to all concerned.

CHAPTER XX

WHAT MANNER OF MAN?

DANIEL WEBSTER is now at the summit of his career. Higher he will not mount either in achievement or honor, though his hopes be still fixed upon an unattainable goal. Nor will there occur any essential alteration of personality. Thus far we have chiefly seen him as his contemporaries saw him, on perpetual parade. What manner of spirit animated that splendid shell which bulked and glowed as the nation's most impressive embodiment?

In his essay on Pepys Stevenson says:

> "To strike a posture once and for all and to march through life like a drum-major is to be highly disagreeable to others and a fool for one-self into the bargain."

This is precisely what Daniel Webster did, and he was as far as any man of his time from being either a fool or a bore. Life was a stage to him and Daniel Webster cast for the leading part. To discern him clearly we must lift the histrion's mask. He was as self-conscious, as rôle-conscious as a tragedian at a tea. As conscientious, too, in playing up to his audience

and the responsibilities of his part. His is no cheap pose, but the serious acceptance of a high characterization. His fellow-citizens cherished a definite picture of him:

> "He represented to them the majesty and the strength of the Government. He gave them a sense of safety. Amid the flighty politics of the time and the loud insincerity of Washington, there seemed one solid thing in America."

It was Daniel Webster. At first to New England as a prop and pillar of her sectional interests, afterward to the whole country as representative of a new and fervid nationalism, he stood above all others. Why should he not dress the part? When a special declaration of patriotism is called for, out comes the buff-and-blue costume, the brass buttons gleam upon the swelling chest; it is all perfectly in character.

For lesser occasions he donned the formal and forensic double-breasted coat. One instinctively visualizes him in this. He sits in it for his portrait, and an intensely public portrait it usually is. That convenient and supposititious whipping-boy, the visitor from Mars, examining the posed effect, would never be in danger of mistaking him for a philosopher, warrior, poet, or explorer. He is obviously, formidably the Illustrious Defender, the Massachusetts Thunderer, the rock of defense of the Constitution, the godlike

Daniel. An engraver once turned out for the market a likeness of him with the title: "Daniel Webster; Statesman and Orator." The descriptive legend was as superfluous as if it had read: "Daniel Webster; Human Being; Male."

Only one painter (besides little Miss Goodridge to whom, perhaps, he was more the man than the god) gives us a different presentation. The second Gilbert Stuart portrait penetrated beneath the noble pose. It shows him in middle age, a bit of a beau, serenely, perhaps amusedly, cognizant of his physical splendor, a lover of life and its shining hazards, self-indulgent, benign, with lips that have savored the strong, rich, intoxicant compound of existence and found it good. One wonders what Webster himself thought of that delicate betrayal. He is said to have approved it; to have made a bow to the finished masterpiece and said, "I am willing *that* should go down to posterity." He was always calmly (and justifiably) confident of posterity's interest in his splendid self.

His mind also was on exhibit. He was, in all matters of opinion, a formalist. Constitutional breezes fanned his brow, if I may borrow a locution which he, in a burst of exuberance, applied to Manhattan Island. The letter was to him as sacrosanct as the spirit. Not only did he regard the Bible as inspired doctrine, but also as incomparable literature. The Old Testament writers whose utterances the profane and classic Ran-

dolph alluded to as "Hebrew jargon," were to him indisputably superior to Homer, Pindar, Virgil, and all other writers of antiquity. Anything in Holy Writ was beyond dispute. Extraneous facts must adjust themselves as best they might. For himself, he finds no difficulty in reconciling science and dogma. He was able to fix geographically the Garden of Eden and the Four Great Rivers. Geology, which he charmingly characterizes as "the private life of the earth," proves the Biblical account of the creation to his entire satisfaction. "It is full of interest and wholly corroborative of the Scriptures." Then he leaps a century or so ahead of his time and adds: "It is taught by books; it should be taught by excursions in the fields."

In application he was not an essentially religious man. A cousin of his who had known him long thinks that his religion was "sentimental rather than practical." He had a habit of applauding, when church or clergy were complimented in a public speech. Worship played a small and formal part in his life. His mind was correct and convinced; his spirit was never involved in anything but the outward observance. Yet one of his vague, unrealized ambitions was to write a book about Christianity. First, however, he was going to write about the Constitution.

The book-value of his morality was high. Reports

from Utah about Mormonism horrified his later years. "I never read so disgusting and terrific accounts of human depravity and enormity. Governor Young has more than thirty wives!"

Art and morals dovetail in his mind. He judged literature by its presumptive influence upon human behavior. "The author who cannot please without endangering the morals of his readers had better study ethics than write poetry," he severely opines. Moore comes in for stern reprehension. "He breathes the effusions of licentious ingenuity upon the restraints of the young and they dissolve like scorched flax." Flaming youth, indeed! As for Byron: "I have tried hard to find something in him to like besides his genius and wit, but there is no other likable quality about him," he observes ingenuously.

Cooper, upon whom he once lectured (despite the handicap of never having read him), he approves for good and sufficient reasons.

> "These writings uphold all good sentiments, sustain all good morals, and maintain just taste. And after religion and morals and good taste, the next thing I have to say is that all of his writings from beginning to end are patriotic, American throughout and throughout. . . . Mr. Fenimore Cooper showed the power imbued with deep principle, of amusing and to a great extent

enlightening the rising generation without any injury to their morals or any solicitation of depraved passions."

The whole duty of a novelist! These are, as it were, negative tastes. On the positive side there is not much to go upon. His favorite poem appears to have been "Cooper's Hill" by Denham, one couplet of which he was especially prone to quote, terming it "those lines of unsurpassed beauty":

> Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing, full.

It served him as a quotation to typify eloquence, character, and Niagara Falls.

To Robert Winthrop he confided that he never went on a journey without taking in his trunk Mrs. E. Willard's "History of the United States or Republic of America, Exhibited in Connection with a Chronologic and Progressive Geography." This worthy compendium, published in 1830, is a direct, simple, and warmly patriotic exposition, of high school caliber, with all important events conveniently set in the margin. The admiring Mr. Webster deemed it "very valuable." It was not from this volume, however, that he derived his publicly expressed and subsequently revised opinion of the California coast as "the poorest country in the world . . . rockbound, cheerless, uninviting, and not a harbor on it." Evidently Francis

Drake's spirited report had not come within his purview.

Toward the art and practice of literature his regard was wistful. To be sure, his contributions to the *Anthology* soon ceased and his journalistic efforts changed from the imaginative and philosophical to the political and utilitarian; but he looked forward to an old age which he might devote to leaving behind him a worthy record of print. In political philosophy he was too alien to the restless and radical spirits of literary New England to be admitted to their circle, though Whittier, Lowell, and Emerson at least recognized his power. There are hints that he would have welcomed such a fellowship, but the "Mutual Admiration Society" of Yankee literati was a close corporation with cold welcome for the outsider, who must be content to

> Hear through the murk, like thunder through a fog,
> The dim susurrus of the rolling log.

After his apostasy on the slavery question as the strongly Abolitionist group deemed it, there was no hope of his ever being, in the current and tart phrase of the day, "insured in the Mutual."

He could be modest in his disclaimers. When the *Royal Gazette* of Madrid fell into an error, not wholly obsolete in our own cultured century, and politely attributed the famous dictionary of his cousin to him, he said to a Boston audience:

"Ye shades of Noah Webster! How will you not be offended at this intrusion on your rights and your repose! 'He make my dictionary!' he will exclaim. 'He could never have made my spelling-book!' And this would be true. . . . In the literary sense of that phrase I am certainly no man of letters."

Nevertheless he was flattered to be so thought. Acting for the Cooper Memorial Meeting committee, a naïve gentleman named Kimball sought him out at the Astor House to invite him to preside. Mr. Webster seemed rather taken aback.

"Do you think it would be appropriate?" he asked.

"Certainly, Mr. Webster. Most appropriate."

"But I am not a literary man. It seems to me you should select one for this office."

"Mr. Webster," returned the emissary, "we certainly claim you as such. You will be judged by your printed works and printed works constitute literature."

Gratified and reassured by this liberal interpretation, the great orator consented to deliver the address.

If his career was not, in the strictest sense, scholarly, his feeling for intellectual achievement was that of a scholar. He humorously regrets so much time spent with lawyers and courts which might have been devoted to association with men of science and to the study of nature. This is a lively contrast to the ambi-

tion of his harshest and most uncompromising critic, the Rev. Theodore Parker, who in middle age considered taking up billiards and light conversation.

Books he might not write for lack of leisure and pressure of necessity, but the *cacoëthes scribendi* was irritant upon his mental skin and he relieved it by frequent orgies of correspondence. At one of his busy periods he indited to Mrs. Blake, a regular correspondent, thirty-two hundred words of reflection and description occasioned by a visit to Niagara Falls, and two days later, fearful lest he had not done justice to his topic, he followed up with five hundred words additional. Landscapes often brought on a flux of words; he described to the most diverse of correspondents and in (to be quite candid) uninspired verbosity, scenes at Marshfield, in New Hampshire, and on his travels. When an absentee Secretary of State, he included in an official letter to President Fillmore a lengthy passage of geographical description which could hardly have brightened the working day of that busy executive. Nor were his friends exempt from that process known as trying it on the dog; witness this early effusion of epistolary prophecy, probably designed and possibly employed for delivery from the rostrum:

"I already see in my imagination the time when the banner of civil war shall be unfurled,

when Discord's hydra form shall set up her hideous yell, and through her hundred mouths shall howl destruction through our empire, and when American blood shall be made to flow in rivers by American swords. But propitious heaven prevent such dreadful calamities. Internally secure, we have nothing to fear. Let Europe pour her embattled millions around us; let her cohorts throng over our shores from St. Lawrence to Ste. Marie's; yet united Columbia shall stand unmoved. The manes of her deceased Washington shall guard the liberties of his country and direct the sword of freedom in the day of battle."

There were lighter efforts, too, in which he could be sportive and charming. He wrote to Edward Everett on the symbolism of the barber-pole; to another friend a defense of the American ancestry of the wild turkey; to an English lady with a taste for gardening, on that loveliest of New England wildflowers, the fringed gentian; to others on the etymology of the tautog, and the cooking of the same. There is extant a curious example of the great man in playful mood, a letter to a pretty Washington débutante, accompanying her bonnet which she had left at the Webster house in a rainstorm. The bonnet confesses to the statesman; its ribbons blush at mention of a certain name; it is all quite arch and foolish and charming.

To Mrs. Paige, a favorite correspondent, he writes: "The subject is Tripe. T.R.I.P.E. . . . the Etymon, the Greek word, trepein, to turn, to wind." (Cousin Noah had not heard about this; he confesses in his Dictionary, uncertainty about the derivation.) Daniel is humorously free of doubt. The word must not be ascribed, he gravely warns, to the Latin, tripos! Some of the letters of direction to his beloved Marshfield are ripe in farm lore and rich in the tang of the soil. But these products of a pen which he wielded with evident self-satisfaction are disappointingly lacking in shrewdness of characterization or insight into the personality of those whom he knew. I doubt whether Webster was ever much interested in other people. He wrote, as he spoke, for an admiring audience. Not for him the avid catholicity of Terence's "*Homo sum; nil humani a me alienum puto.*"

With his passing youth he dropped his knack of easy and felicitous poetic jingle. When his infant son, Charles, died, he did indeed turn to poetry for the solace of expression. His feeling is genuine and deep; Webster was a fond father. It is kinder not to reproduce the verses.

Timidity was thought to be his besetting weakness by the politicians. Keyes, a shrewd if sometimes mistaken commentator, thought it "impossible that such a man should become a successful political leader." On the rostrum, of all surprising places, self-distrust was

likely to seize and shake him. Did there surge up from inner recesses of the subconscious the recurrent terror of the day when an ill-dressed, unhappy little country lout fled, paralyzed with stage fright, from the derision of his fellows at Exeter? At the height of his powers, observers noted "occasionally something deprecating in his manner and apologetic in his discourse." His intimate friend, Stetson, of the Astor House, offers the curious testimony that he was "liable to appear at physical disadvantage" and that his body would "cower and grow feeble under mental excitement." Yet when courage was required he could confront a suspicious and hostile audience and conquer them, not by appeal, but by the power of his righteous scorn.

Again there were those accesses of black depression when he was moody, morose, profoundly self-distrustful. Was it worth while going on? He felt himself maladjusted to the world, victim of undeserved ill-fortune, persecuted by men and fate, sure symptoms of spiritual homelessness. Bad health may have accounted for this in part. Beginning as a delicate boy (or was he perhaps only a spoiled child, quick to take advantage of family favoritism?) he developed into robust and powerful manhood. This he undermined by intemperance, more of eating than of drinking, though the latter contributed. As has been suggested, the "dope" medicine to which he innocently resorted

for relief from his diarrhea, may well have affected his outlook on life at times. With a body harassed by pain and often convulsed with asthma, and a mind hounded by debt and the infinite complications of his involved finances, it would be phenomenal if he had escaped gloomy phases. The more to his credit that he seldom let them affect the serenity of his temper or the consideration of his bearing toward others.

In one respect he was bold enough. He could not be, to borrow a religious phrase, convicted of error. Calhoun attacked him on sound grounds. "Look at the record," he retorted, though well knowing that the record would convict him. Corrections and proof of mistakes he blandly ignored. This had the effect (foreseen, doubtless) of discomfiting his critics. In one of the debates on slavery he made three important historical mistakes, regarding the ordinance of 1787. Benton of Missouri sent for the Journal of Congress and proved his citations wrong. Webster made no reply. When his speech was printed, Benton read it and found all three errors embodied therein. The orator had simply ignored the correction. What are you going to do with a man like that?

Consistency was no jewel to him. He could say to an agricultural gathering in Rochester, "It is a misnomer to talk about the protection of manufacturers; that is not the thing we want or need," and a few months later tell the factory owners of New Hamp-

shire that protection for their products is what he and the country have close at heart. He could deride as foolish those people who declared that slavery was a cornerstone of the Constitution, and a few years later go solemnly on record to the effect that if slavery were destroyed, the Constitution would be undermined. Free trade was, at first, a high and guiding principle; later, a "licentious doctrine." He had the journalist's contempt for the memory of the public.

In his personal relations he was, with very few exceptions, magnificently remote. He possessed no talent for fellowship, though plenty of taste for conviviality. Dignity came natural to him, but he lacked ease of contact and his poise was largely pose. This he betrays, though unconsciously, in his naïve comment upon English manners. "This perfect politeness has, of course, cost a good deal of drill. Fuss and feathers can be subdued only by strict discipline." That it could be natural would never occur to him.

Though deficient in grace, he was not wanting in graciousness. Seward, a young man on his first visit to Washington, called to pay his respects and fell captive to the great man's "plain, direct, and confiding manner." Lesser men, however, complained that when they were presented to him he would not turn from his Senate desk but would absently stretch out a left hand to be shaken whilst continuing to wield the driven pen with his right. What they failed to under-

stand was that this was a special exhibition of a statesman engaged in the arduous service of the nation. In public or private he could be depended upon to give a good show.

I have spoken of his amenity in parliamentary relations. This did not derive alone, I think, from acquiescence in the correct forms; the source was deeper, and was rooted in an inherent respect and consideration for the rights and the feelings of others. Webster was instinctively humanitarian. He hated injustice, suffering, imposition upon the weak. That is why the practice of slavery revolted him. The institution itself he must, perforce, respect, because it was embodied in the Constitution which was to him sacred above any human right. Seward's clear doctrine of "a higher law than the Constitution" seemed to him blasphemy; he could not refer to it without sneering vindictiveness. But what he could do to mitigate the rigors of the system in any particular case, he did from a full and generous heart. He disliked child labor and was opposed to factory work for women.

He was a sportsman. By that I do not mean a wholesale slayer of wild things. Quite the reverse. He was keen with gun or rod, but he had the same respect for animal as for human rights. The game-hog would have revolted him. Many creatures of air and woodland found sanctuary at Marshfield. He was

an observant naturalist as well as an eager sportsman. Everything about the open was dear to him. Economically Marshfield was a failure, like all else that he touched. Nevertheless, he made himself an expert farmer, and his views and advice on crops were received with respect on fall nights around the stove in the village store, where a man enjoyed no exemption from flat contradiction merely because he was an orator and Senator and a presumptive President. Was that to add weight to his opinion on kelp as a fertilizer or what to do about the codling moth? Not if Marshfield, South Parish, knew itself! And because their great man took it all in good part, they adored as well as revered him.

Sometimes his mind seemed to flash forward into the future, as in his prescience of the value of water-power sites. Again and in another realm: "We teach too much by manuals, too little by direct intercourse with the pupil's mind. We have too much of words, too little of things." Yet he coolly abandoned "what is called the science of political economy. There is no such science" is his cavalier dismissal of the subject. He was one of the first to endorse a gymnasium for Dartmouth.

To deal with his moral character is a difficult and ungracious necessity. Here we impinge upon the foggy realm of opinion and rumor, much of it prejudiced. But the general reputation of a public man is

and must be accepted as an intrinsic part of his history and cannot be expunged from the record. That he was a consistent drinker, sometimes intoxicated in public, is a matter beyond debate. To-day we call such a man a drunkard. In that more loose and lenient time he was not so regarded. Too many others outdid him. Nevertheless, his intemperance was marked enough to be the subject of none too subtle jocularity in the papers. He made no concealment of this laxity. He was what he was and no deprecating apologist therefor.

Upon one or all of three points a public man is liable to attack by his enemies. They say that he is a drunkard, or that he is profligate with women, or that he is crazy. No one, so far as I am aware, ever impugned Webster's sanity; it was too massive and constant. As for women, there can be no doubt that both contemporary opinion and tradition are against him. Charges of immorality, though meager in detail, were openly made both in his lifetime and immediately after his death. The local word-of-mouth legend in Boston and Marshfield is unpleasant. As scrupulous an historian as Barrett Wendell is dubious about his "minor morals." Lodge accepts his ill-repute; John Quincy Adams alleged it and stuck to it; Theodore Parker and Thomas Wentworth Higginson proclaimed it from the pulpit.

Details are not wholly lacking. There were stories

about his relations with the pretty wife of a political writer, which his arch-apologist, George Ticknor Curtis, thinks it necessary to explain away by citing the fact of the husband's esteem for him. Complaisant husbands have never been a wholly unknown species in Washington. A woman described as respectable who called at his office when he was Secretary of State, charged him with attempted assault. His course was peculiar. He went before a notary and swore to an explicit denial on the ground that this made him guilty of a crime, perjury, if her allegations were true. As if her charges, in themselves, if authentic, would not have convicted him criminally! But public men are too often victims of blackmail for such an accusation to be too readily accepted as true.

It is but fair to say that some, at least, of the aspersions upon Webster's morals emanated from fanatic sources, in particular from the pen of an Abolitionist woman journalist who was not only somewhat irresponsible, but appears to have been oversensitive to suggestions of sex irregularity in others—a not unusual phenomenon of the female fanatic mind. Discount, even disregard this sort of insufficiently supported scandal, we may; it is not possible wholly to ignore the public statements of contemporaries like Adams, Parton, Parker, and Higginson. There is a striking suggestion from one of his warmest friends that he was morally imperceptive. Emerson quotes Stetson as

saying of him: "It is true that he sometimes commits crimes, but without any guilt."

More than any contemporary Webster was overpraised and overabused. Parton has well expressed his effect upon his public:

> "In his lifetime it was impossible to judge him aright. His presence usually overwhelmed criticism. His intimacy always fascinated it. It so happened that he grew to his full stature and attained his utmost development in a community where human nature appears to be undergoing a process of diminution, where people are smaller-boned, less muscular, more nervous, and more susceptible than their ancestors. He possessed in consequence an enormous physical magnetism, as we term it, over his fellow-citizens, apart from the natural influence of his talents and understanding. Fidgety men were quieted in his presence. Women were spellbound by it, and the busy, anxious public contemplated his majestic calm with a feeling of relief as well as admiration."

In equal measure he was despised and denounced by those whom his political shifts had alienated. Much of what they alleged is false or magnified. Exactly how much of it may be true, we shall never know.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SUPPORT OF STATESMANSHIP

SOLID Men of Boston met to take measures for the benefit of Daniel Webster, and, incidentally, of themselves. The Appletons were there, the wealthiest family in New England; Osias Goodwin, the capitalist; Benjamin Reed, representing the growing railroad interests; John A. Lowell, the prosperous merchant; William Amory of the mills; John D. Williams, the wine importer; David Sears, the millionaire-man; "Long Tom" Perkins, reputed to be worth a million and a half; Cartwright and Lamb, the insurance company presidents; Josiah Quincy, Jr., and Franklin Dexter, the counselors; Amos Binney, whose fortune derived from supply contracts in the War of 1812; Messrs. Sargent, Thayer, and Cabot of the State Street financial district; Thomas Curtis and Thomas Wales, for the shipping trade; and others. Not a man there but could write a check in six figures.

Formality was dispensed with. This was business.

"It is a question, gentlemen, of how much money can be raised."

"How much money does he need?"

"Ask the spirit of Nicholas Biddle," said a dry voice.

"Is this fund designed to satisfy his debts?" asked Mr. Quincy.

"Are there enough assets in this gathering to perform that miracle?" barked "Long Tom" Perkins.

"It is designed to afford him the means of living in the condition that befits his dignity and that of the great State which he represents," explained William Appleton smoothly.

"Are we given to understand that without this—er—honorarium, Mr. Webster would be unwilling to accept an election to the Senate?" asked Mr. Chickering.

"Unable, let us say, however willing, to serve his country and his State."

"Put it in this way," proffered Mr. Dexter. "Mr. Webster can command, in the exercise of his profession, a very large income. His service at Washington has involved a sacrifice of his personal interests which, he feels, he can no longer afford. Can any gentleman here gainsay the justice of this view?"

"Is not the laborer worthy of his hire?" piously piped Mr. Chickering.

"It's a question of how much he's worth to us," asserted the elongated Mr. Perkins. A man of blunt, uncompromising speech.

"To the nation," blandly amended Mr. Robbins of the Worthington Woollen Manufacturing Company.

"To the woollen trade," persisted Long Tom. "To the shipping trade." He grinned at Curtis, who sat next him. "To the banking trade," jerking his head toward the three Appletons. "To the grocery trade, the store business, the shippers. Most of all to the investors of State Street." He waved an inclusive hand around the circle. "Well, I say one hundred thousand dollars."

"Too much," objected half a dozen voices.

"If we could collect half of that amount here," suggested Mr. Sears, "representations could be made to certain of our friends and associates in New York which might induce them to raise a like sum."

"I am apprised that there was a project of that kind undertaken in New York a few years since," said Mr. Binney.

"Do you have reference to the—er—contribution of Mr. Blatchford and his associates?" inquired Mr. Shaw.

"That was a loan," corrected Samuel Appleton, Webster's son-in-law, who was present and not over-comfortable.

"And what was the amount of this—loan?" Mr. Perkins wished to learn.

"To the best of my information, it was thirty-five thousand dollars," answered Mr. Sears, who had ac-

cepted an exaggerated rumor. Such reports usually are exaggerated.

"Surely we should be able to do as well as that," said Mr. Amory, whose mill interests needed all the protectionist support available.

"Better," insisted Mr. Dexter. "Fifty thousand is, if the court ple—ah—in my humble opinion, the minimum to which our endeavors should be directed."

It was so agreed. A fund committee was organized with Mr. Sears as Chairman. The moneyed, mercantile, and manufacturing interests of the community were to be thoroughly canvassed.

"The project must be managed quietly," said some one.

"Secretly," said another.

"Private as murder," amended a third, and there was a chuckle. Possibly more than one there present had seen that phrase in a familiar handwriting, superscribed at the head of a letter.

Secrecy in an enterprise to which a hundred or more people are privy, is a Utopian ideal. Webster had not yet taken his seat in the Senate when Boston was buzzing with rumors about the "terms which a Senator has made with his friends before he consented to be chosen," as Charles Sumner wrote in a letter to Webster's good and helpful friend, Judge Story. "This treaty has become very generally known. . . . When I last heard of it, the Boston sum had been sub-

scribed, except about $12,000." He had heard that fifty thousand was to be raised in Boston; the same in New York. His local information was approximately correct; $37,000 was the exact amount collected by the Solid Men. Of the New York allotment there is no record. John Quincy Adams knew of the offering and, tremulous with age and rage, recorded his conviction that no public man could accept such gifts without peril.

The list below affords a fairly comprehensive view of Boston's political, mercantile, financial and social, and, to a lesser degree, intellectual leadership in the middle Forties.

Amory, Wm.
Appleton, Nathan
Appleton, Saml
Appleton, Wm.

Binney, A.
Brown, David S.

Cabot, Henry
Cartwright, C. W.
Chadwick, Eben
Chickering, J.
Curtis, Thomas B.

Dexter, Franklin

Edwards, J. W.

Gardiner, John L.
Goodwin, Osias
Grey, H.
Grey, John C.

Lamb, Thos.
Lawrence, Saml
Loring, Benj.
Lowell, Francis C.
Lowell, John A.
Lyman, George W.

Pickman, Dudley S.
Perkins, Thos. H.
Prescott, Wm. H.

Quincy, Josiah, Jr.

Robbins, Edward H.
Reed, Benj. T.

Sargent, Ignatius
Sears, David (Chairman)
Shaddock, C. G.

Shaw, Robert G.	Wales, Thos. B.
Smith, Eben	Wells, John
Stone, W. W.	Williams, John D.
Thayer, Thomas E.	Winchester, W. P.

Finding their benefice a matter of common gossip, the Sears Committee took the only course left to them: they came out into the open. The gift became a "memorial"; Webster, in his grateful and dignified letter of acknowledgment, employs that euphemism. Mr. Sears solemnly certified that the enterprise was conducted without Mr. Webster's sanction or knowledge. "Sanction" is an elastic word, but if the beneficiary had no knowledge of the coming aid, he was one of the few Bostonians to enjoy the bliss of that ignorance. The letter of transmittal informs the recipient that the gift is a recognition of the "valuable services you have rendered to your whole country." According to the specified terms, the fund was to be deposited, and the income (not the principal) to be at Mr. Webster's disposal semi-annually. This, I suspect, may be taken with a grain of salt. In such form the memorial would have been a mere mockery. What possible sense could there be in his forfeiting a prospective legal income of fifteen or twenty thousand dollars, for a pittance of semi-annual interest? Cash was what he needed. With a fair margin of safety, we may assume that the "memorial" soon found its way into,

and through the permanent hole out of, the Webster pocket.

Whatever scandal may have attached to the transaction left the statesman serene and unmoved. Had his conscience been touched, we should find him explaining and excusing. He knew that he was not being bribed. The opinions which he held were unaffected by the money. His votes could not conceivably be influenced. Opinions and votes were such as the solid Bostonians desired to have effective in Washington and they had raised the fund as a logical and proper means of giving them the best available expression. Moreover, other statesmen were similarly aided. Friends had just raised $25,000 to pay Clay's debts. Gambling debts, too, in part, which his own certainly were not. He had a right to feel aggrieved by the unjust interpretation put upon the concerted kindliness of a group of fellow-citizens.

"Whose bread I eat, his song I sing." Gratitude in Daniel Webster took a practical form. On the very day of his acknowledgment of the Sears "memorial," he was writing to Boston a report upon the progress of the Sub-Treasury bill which was of special interest to financial circles. "I am trying to poll the Senate. . . . Show this to Mr. Sears and other friends." He was naturally desirous of proving himself worthy of the charitable group's confidence. This is but one of

many letters, throughout his legislative career, evincing his readiness to "observe and report."

Nor were his activities confined to the Senate. Business interests in Boston were against any unnecessary stirring up of troublesome questions which might arouse bad feeling in other sections. When the Whig caucus threatened to get out of hand and, stirred to reckless emotions by Wendell Phillips's eloquence, commit itself against Slavery, Webster was hastily summoned by the alarmed representatives of Bostonian solidity, and his mere arrival, conspicuously leaning on the arm of Lawrence, the capitalist and quietist, killed the movement. It was in consequence of this that Adams expressed his wish to live long enough "to expose the great fallacy of Mr. Daniel Webster, who is perpetually talking about the Constitution while he is indifferent to freedom and those great interests which the Constitution was established to preserve." Emerson tartly opined that the word "liberty" in the mouth of Mr. Webster, was like the word "love" in the mouth of a courtesan.

One of his surrendered Constitutional defenses was that in respect to the acquisition of new territory by the nation. He had not returned to the Senate in time to block Tyler's pet Texas plan. By the exercise of skillful strategy (or slick trickery, if one belonged to the Opposition) the President and Calhoun had rushed through a bill in the final days of the session, provid-

ing for the admission of Texas into the Union, and thereby insuring war with Mexico, this with the purpose of augmenting the legislative majority of Slavery advocates. Webster, who had always believed and declared the scheme unconstitutional, now decided that there was no power in the Government to undo it, and that he would best accept the inevitable.

The reëlected Senator's position in the Senate was an enviable one. A speech by Daniel Webster was an event in the Capital; forecast of it crowded the galleries. Demands for reprints of his addresses kept him in debt to the printers. Massachusetts felt that he stood as a mighty rock, bulwarking her rights; so long as Daniel Webster remained on guard, the Government was safe. Charles Marsh had already borne testimony to the eloquence with which he defended his aspersed State against attacks by the Southerners, when, if that adoring biographer is to be believed (not always a safe assumption), a New England group in the gallery "shed tears like girls. There was scarcely a dry eye in the Senate . . . grave judges and men grown old in dignified life turned aside their heads." Yankee oratory has declined since then; or perhaps Yankee tear-ducts have hardened. Either Senator Walsh or Senator Gillette of the Bay State may be heard to-day without undue punctuation of sobs from overhead.

In this period occurs one of those curious instances

of tradition being Webster's best editor. The famous phrase "Massachusetts; there she stands!" is attributed to his address before the Whig caucus. What he actually said was this:

"And when the question is asked: 'How stands Old Massachusetts, let you and I be able to hold up our heads and say, 'Look at her and see how she stands,' " which is neither impeccable as grammar nor specially effective as rhetoric. He had previously used the phrase: "There she stands; behold her and judge for yourself," in the reply to Hayne.

Senator Webster had no lack of important matters to occupy his attention. He was now in the Opposition, where he really preferred to be. He shone in attack rather than defense. The admission of Texas stirred the Abolitionists who were muttering threats of secession over this accession to the cause of slavery. The Whigs of Massachusetts, in State convention, had earlier declared, presumably at Webster's dictation, that this would be a violation of the Constitution, but they now executed a *volte-face* to annexation "at the words of the leaders and as by a miraculous change," bitterly remarked Webster. Was he no longer their leader?

War with Mexico was looming, and burst into flame or, rather, into an inglorious flicker, in 1846. It cost Webster the life of his son Edward. The Wilmot Proviso that slavery be forever prohibited from terri-

tory to be acquired from Mexico came so near passing as to infuriate and alarm the South, which had hitherto rather scornfully underestimated the growth of anti-Slavery fervor. At this time, Webster favored the Proviso.

Much as he disliked the Texas development, it might turn out to his private profit. War with Mexico (the supplies for which he eventually and rather inexplicably voted) could have but one result, victory for the United States. Thereby the value of the "Mexican scrip" which he had acquired would be enhanced. He set about securing an advance on this speculative paper, but without success.

Once more his long deferred hope of rich returns on the French Claims revived. To his perennially job-hunting son he wrote the go-getting business letter, quoted in a previous chapter, so sharply illustrative of his mingling of legislative with legal activities of politics with personal profit; that letter in which he exhorts the younger Webster to be after the agency for claimants quickly, and suggests the use of his own name and influence (privately) as added inducement to the prospective clients.

A claims bill passed, but Polk vetoed it. This disappointment left the Senator quite stranded. He had bought a house on D Street between 5th and 6th, the Swann mansion proving too large for his needs. He was feverishly urging that his friend, Harvey, drum

up what fees he could in Boston; there was no money to be had in Washington. "I have put off a thing that he knows about here to April 1st & can put it off no longer." The Bank of the United States was long defunct, but its credit list was painfully alive. The old debt to it had absorbed nearly all of Webster's Western holdings—he thought there might be some remnants and remainders left, worth looking after —and, with interest and expenses, he still owed $38,331.81, as per the official statement. The sum was worse than discouraging. It was impossible.

Marshfield, for which he had no more power of denial than a lover for his mistress, was calling for needed upkeep. His tailor was drawing upon him for overdue bills with interest. There is a note of pitiful desperation in his cry to Fletcher Webster: "I can stand it no longer."

Just ahead, a blacker trouble, born of his own financial ineptitude and a malicious trick of chance, was lying in wait for him.

CHAPTER XXII

THE UNINTENTIONAL DEFAULTER

AN early contemporary and sometime ally of Webster's in the House was Charles J. Ingersoll of Pennsylvania. He was a man of learning, capacity, and social consequence, but was handicapped by an ineradicable conviction that any one who differed from him must be defective morally or mentally or both. Because of the acerbity of his nature and the intemperance of his utterances, he was not popular among his colleagues. Webster's moderation in the settlement of the Northeastern boundary question had disgusted him. He was a good deal of a jingo. Noting that the Massachusetts Senator was now evincing the same judicial attitude in the pending Oregon boundary determination, Ingersoll, who was a "Fifty-four-Forty-or-Fight" super-patriot, rose in the House, reviewed the former treaty, and charged the Secretary of State in Tyler's Cabinet with lukewarm patriotism and having corrupted the party press in Maine.

It was the sort of thing which Webster could well have afforded to ignore. Instead, he rose in his wrath and proceeded to dismember the Pennsylvanian, in a

philippic containing one of the most perfectly modulated rhythms in all oratory.

"Sir, I grow weary, weary with this speech."

Here we have Webster at his eloquent best. Anger had shorn him of all his efflorescences and brought him down to a deadly simplicity.

> "Sir, I grow weary, weary with this speech. Who should allude to representations and imputations apparently so groundless? Why, sir, there is one thing in the speech from which I will supplicate its author to have me excused. He says, he never agreed with me in politics. That is true. We never did, and I think we never shall agree. He said, many years ago, that if he had lived in the time of the Revolution he would have been a Tory. I don't think I would. He has said also very recently in a printed book of his, that the Declaration of Independence was carried with difficulty, if not by accident. That is his estimate of the great charter of our national existence. We would never agree in politics, I admit. But he said, Mr. Webster is a man of talents. Here I beg to be excused. I can bear his abuse, but if he undertakes my commendation, I begin to tremble for my reputation. I ask again, what can account for the apparent maliciousness of his statements? I

do not think that they were made through malice—I am inclined to think it proceeds from a moral obtuseness—a native want of perception between truth and falsehood, or the result of so long a discipline in that sublime school of morals that teaches all is fair in politics; and if he ever possessed an iota of original, native discrimination, it is altogether obliterated. But what does he say further? Speaking of the Treaty of Washington, he says, 'the good old Bay State,' etc. He loves the old Bay State. *He* loves Massachusetts!—*He*—*HE!* If he loves Massachusetts, he is like

> "'That luckless swain, who grieved
> For friendship unreturned, and unrequited love.'

"I can tell him, sir, the whole people of Massachusetts hold him and his love, his principles, his speeches, his veracity, and his value of truth in utter—what shall I say?—in anything but respect. I don't know their motives. I say the mind of the man seems to be grotesque—*bizarre*. Why, it is rather the caricature of a mind than a mind itself. Sir, we sometimes use a phrase borrowed from mechanics; when we see a man of some knowledge and a little talent, who is found absolutely incapable of producing anything useful, we say, 'There is a screw loose some-

where.' In this case the screws are loose all over. The whole machine is rickety, disjointed, and creaking—as often upside down as upside up; as often injurious to those who use it as doing injury to others. . . . Sir, I leave the author of these slanders where he is—I leave him in the worst company I know of in the world—I leave him with himself."

As invective, superb; as argument or refutation, not so impressive; and as strategy, disastrous. Unless he intended to ask for an investigation and stand upon the record, silence was his proper course. Certainly he should have better estimated the sort of opponent with whom he had to deal; above all he should have recalled phases of the Maine campaign far more damaging potentially than ill-supported generalizations about propaganda. What harm, after all, in a judicious molding of public opinion through an amenable press? Whereas shortage in one's accounts with the Government is quite another matter.

Gathering his *disjecta membra* after the attack, the gentleman from Pennsylvania returned to the State Department to delve for further evidence and there encountered Mr. Stubbs ("Fit name for a voucher-grubber," pertly remarked a Webster journalist).

Stubbs was and had been for years in the financial section of the Department. Expenditures for the Se-

cret Service fund went through his hands, on requisition. In this special instance, Webster had the system intermitted, and arranged to handle the money direct, being responsible only for vouchers showing the disbursements. Under this easy arrangement he drew, in two years, seventeen thousand dollars. Now, to give Daniel Webster a free hand with loose money was like shutting a child with a box of matches in a fireworks factory. But Stubbs was only a subordinate. He was in no position to protest. All that he could do was to watch. He watched.

The inevitable happened. The Maine operations were completed and the accounts, turned in, failed to show where $2,290 of the $17,000 had gone. Stubbs applied to Mr. Webster to clear it up. Mr. Webster put him off. Pestering a busy chief for details is a risky business for an underling, but Stubbs appears to have possessed the dreary courage of the accountant. He insisted. Getting no satisfaction, he appealed to the President. Some of the anti-Webster plotters in the Cabinet may have put him up to it; or he may have been inspired by spite against his superior, as was suggested: though this is unlikely, as most departmental subordinates were devoted to the Illustrious One for his habitual kindness and consideration. More probably, Stubbs was simply a fanatic of the sacred cult of figures, an impassioned numerologist.

Most of the Stubbs story was embodied in letters

and documents. The rest he presumably told the inquiring Ingersoll. Mr. Webster, he stated, was in default when he resigned from the Department of State, and reimbursed the fund only upon the intervention of President Tyler. Later he produced the vouchers covering part of the deficit. With this information, Congressman Ingersoll returned to the House, eyes and brain bulging. He had confidently expected that Webster, in reply to his original charges, would demand an investigation; instead of the satisfaction of this procedure, he had got only some very high-class abuse. He now made three formal allegations against the ex-Secretary:

Unlawful use of the Secret Service fund.

Misapplying part of the fund to corrupt the party press.

Leaving the Department of State in default of that fund.

> "The records show several letters to him by President Tyler's direction, urging payment [stated Ingersoll] and evasive letters of excuse from Mr. Webster for non-payment. At length a peremptory letter that exposure would or might be the consequence of more delay, procured reimbursement. But *settlement* did not take place until the 1st Feb., 1845, ten days before President Polk arrived in Washington to be inaugurated."

He charged "fraudulent misapplication and personal misuse of the public funds" and stigmatized Webster as "a delinquent and a public defaulter." So direct an accusation could not be passed over. The accused man in a communication to a friend professed himself willing to face "publication of all the papers, accounts, letters, etc.," though he expressed the fear that this might prove "injurious and disreputable to the government." The matter was taken out of his hands by the appointment of a special committee of the House to investigate and report upon the Ingersoll charges.

Examination of Webster's own course, both in the earlier phase when Stubbs was pressing for his vouchers, and now when the accused man was collecting defensive material, suggests the desperation of alarm. He had, in accounting for the missing $2,290, reported an expenditure of $1,040 to a man named Healy; Stubbs pointed out that the Healy voucher was already in. He requested President Tyler to accept his unsupported statement of a payment to some person for services unspecified and name forgotten. He had cited a voucher for $500 to one George Smith, who subsequently testified that he received but $150. The expedients to which the harried statesman was driven are sufficiently indicated in a letter (not produced at the inquiry) in which he mentions having applied for a second payment to a man named Sparks, but

"whether I ever handed the additional sum over to Mr. Sparks or forgot or omitted it, I cannot say . . . I think Judge Sprague was paid $200. . . . Please ask him to say in a certificate that he . . . received from me at the time $200."

This looks uncomfortably like a willingness to put in pretty flimsy evidence. Fletcher Webster proffered this request to Sprague who helpfully recalled the $200 payment and so certified by return mail, though he was not sure on what bank the check was drawn. Even more obliging was Francis O. J. Smith, Webster's former chief of propaganda, who wrote to Fletcher after the Ingersoll charges were published:

"My early letter to your father will cover more vouchers than he has filed, if need be—and bring the Government in his debt. But this is *inter nos.*"

The records of that Congressional investigation are writ not in water but in whitewash. As far as was humanly possible, the committee, with the exception of a skeptical minority member, avoided all questions which could possibly incriminate the accused. The corruption of the press charge was soon disposed of, F. O. J. Smith testifying that his efforts were confined to the influential *Christian Mentor*, which had not charged him a cent. Ex-President Tyler, questioned with extreme caution, did his loyal best for his former

subordinate, and left the stand with the correct impression that his testimony had not done Mr. Webster much harm. By a system of mathematics which I confess myself unable to comprehend, the committee developed a charitable doubt as to whether the Government did not actually owe Mr. Webster $500. As for the missing $1,000 voucher, they accepted the version that it was "lost, mislaid, or not procured" and gave Webster credit for efforts "to find or procure it. These causes occasioned a delay in the settlement of his accounts for eighteen or twenty months." They appended a testimonial to the integrity and purity of motives of the ex-Secretary of State.

Meantime, a resolution for an investigation had been offered in the Senate. It was voted down, 44 to 1. That body was in no mood for the washing of dirty linen, particularly such ancient laundry. Let the House do its own work. The House dawdled on with it. Ingersoll became easily the most unpopular member of the body. Some one dug up an old Pennsylvania process showing that he had failed to account for State funds when he held office there. It was proposed to put him on trial for illegal examination of the secret papers of the State Department. To maintain the secrecy as far as possible, the House sealed the evidence elicited by the Investigating Committee, which produced a carefully garbled report, and the matter was laid upon the table and never revived.

Congressman Brinckerhoff, the minority member, got out a report of his own, and twice attempted to get the whole testimony printed. Both attempts were blocked by the watchful friends of Webster.

Candid analysis of the evidence points strongly to Webster's technical guilt. Considering his notorious carelessness and ineptitude with money, it is at least a tenable hypothesis that he may have used part of the fund unwittingly to satisfy one or more of the obligations constantly pressing upon him, and quite forgotten how it was used. That he intentionally diverted Government money to his own uses, unless with the intention of paying it back promptly—in briefer terms, that he was a deliberate thief—is irreconcilable with any just estimate of his character. President Tyler believed him honest. So, obviously, did the House of Representatives. That and that alone can explain the willingness to suppress the unpleasant affair. Strictly in accord with the evidence the Committee findings certainly were not. But there are times when individual character is and should be dominant over legalistic evidence. The outcome is a notable testimonial to Webster's status with his contemporaries.

Had the verdict gone otherwise, had there been even a considerable vote against him, resulting perhaps in further inquiry, it might have finished then and there his candidacy. Apparently it left him unscathed. There was even some talk of a withdrawal

of the accusations by Ingersoll, but this came to nothing. The accused man never forgave his accuser. When the latter was appointed Minister to France, Senator Webster rose to a question of privilege and had the appointment rejected. It was a prevalent, though perhaps not over-honorable, form of revenge in those days.

Free, now, to follow the grail of the Presidential nomination, he turned his eyes to the South. New England he had recaptured. To the West he was well known. But the Southern Whigs, except in a few individual cases, had never favored him. They preferred Clay, Mangum, White, Calhoun. If he could show himself through the region and arouse that enthusiasm which his personal appeal never failed to stir, there would be laid the foundation for vote-getting a year thereafter. In 1847 he made his swing through the Slave States.

It was not a success. The South did not warm to him as had the West. His support of Jackson against the South Carolina "Nullies" was remembered against him. His fervent emotionalism against slavery could not but count in the balance. Tactful though he was in his speeches to avoid any cause of offense to the touchy Southerners, guarded though all his utterances were when approaching any of the moot topics, his reception was disappointing. It reacted upon him. People who met him socially reported him

"cold and torpid like an alligator . . . absent to a degree of discourtesy which many considered rudeness." It may have been bad health; it was certainly bad politics.

He returned North with a clear perception of one fact. Negative measures, careful avoidances, and soft stepping would never bring the Slave States into line for him. He must disprove, or at least qualify, his enmity to their basic institution. Sometime about this period must have begun his cogitation upon a change which was to make him the most conspicuous, the most acclaimed, and the worst detested figure in the United States.

CHAPTER XXIII

VACILLATIONS

SLACK times followed the Southern trip. Optimism aside, Webster must have appreciated that his chances in the coming convention were of the slightest. There were changes, both surface and subterranean, which he could not comprehend. He was unhappy because he was uncertain of his future course. Parton, who thought him a genius but disliked him, saw him early in this period as "pointless, insincere, a hypocrite and a humbug" and remarks upon public evidences of his abuse of liquor. More friendly observers pictured him in the Senate, cadaverous, absorbed, sometimes oblivious of his surroundings, with a woe-begone expression overshadowing his face.

"Life is running off," he complains to Everett, and dolorously reflects that he has not yet started upon his History of the Constitution of the United States and President Washington's administration. That book upon Christianity, too; it was no further advanced than a few scattered and embryonic notes. "If my time were not all frittered and wasted between a little attention to politics and a little attention to profes-

sional and personal duties, I might possibly yet achieve part of my purpose."

Professionally he was not doing so well. "Always unlucky nowadays," he comments upon his court arguments. He had "seen enough of courts of law to desire to be in and of them no more," he wrote Mr. Sears of the "memorial" fund: "But . . . the means of living, you know, must be had." More than that he no longer expected. The long-lived dream of being rich had departed. He had come to a frame of mind where his obligations, no longer regarded in the old, carefree spirit, were rasping his nerves. "That Southern debt annoys me so as to keep me awake at night," he laments. How he came to owe money there I have not discovered. While on the trip he may have yielded again to his inveterate passion for land investments or perhaps his no less inveterate habit of borrowing.

Now if he could but keep going and eventually reach some settlement, he would ask no more of unpropitious Fate. Other men, smaller in ability and less favorably placed for opportunity, amassed fortunes. How did they contrive it? Luck, he surmises. "No such star presided over his birth," he writes, in a brief survey of his own hapless career, quaintly couched in the third instead of the first person, as was his occasional custom. Marshfield was growing bigger and more burdensome all the time. It was kind of his friends to present him with yachts, but two were

enough for any man, considering the cost of repairs and upkeep. And who would have believed that a herd of llamas could eat so much and such expensive food!

Fletcher, too, was inclined to be extravagant. The father had to warn him against transmitting so many messages by the "lightning"; collect, one must assume, as it was costing the father "a mint of money." Mail could be franked, but not "telegraphs," as the form then was. A chance of a fairly good political job for the son had come up, but to obtain it, a veteran with a family of dependent daughters would have to be dismissed. Webster could not find it in his heart to put the matter through; poor Fletcher must look elsewhere unless the office holder could be otherwise provided for.

As the time drew near for the Whig convention, Webster's meager chances waned. He had probably cherished no great hopes at any time for 1848. Lowell's taunt was hardly justified:

> "Meantime the greatest mind of any age is sulking at Marshfield. It has had its rattle taken away from it. It has been told that nominations were not good for it."

Webster was not sulking: he was biding his time; and, in any case, J. R. L., the journalist, is a less pleasant person than James Russell Lowell, the poet. To

all appearances, Clay would be the nominee again. Age merely increased his personal popularity.

> "That gentleman is bland and persuasive as ever, and one set of admirers only gives place to another [wrote Seward]. Matrons save the gloves he has pressed for relics, and young ladies insist on kissing him in public assemblies. Did ever the fashionable or elect of American society obtain such a triumph as they would have in his election?"

Kisses and reliquary gloves did not win nominations in those pre-suffragist days. An ungloved and non-osculatory soldier named Taylor, whose impersonal attitude toward politics may be gathered from the fact that he never cast a vote in his life, won on the fourth ballot. Webster with twenty-two votes figured consistently but inconspicuously. He could probably have had the Vice-Presidential nomination, but with sound judgment (and bad luck) refused it. "I am allowed to be the first farmer in Marshfield, South Parish, and I am content with this," he wrote to his daughter. But he deemed Taylor's "a nomination not fit to be made" and was with difficulty won to its support.

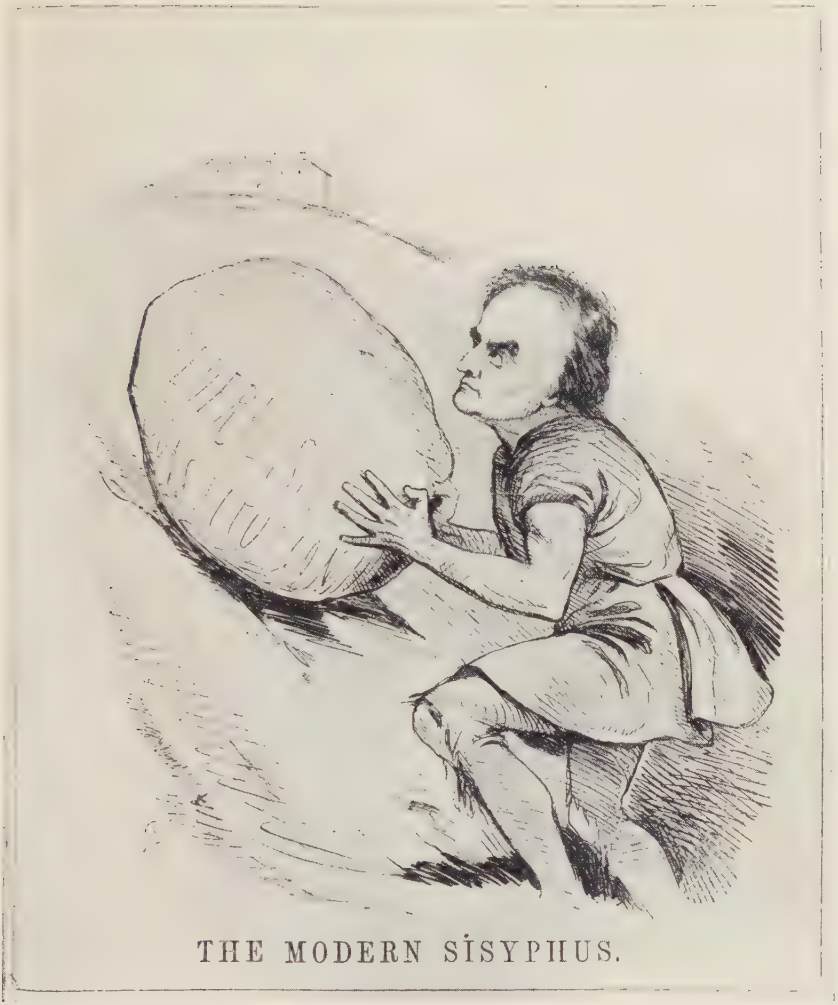
Back in Washington he was discouraged, unhappy. Was it worth while to go on? "I am old and poor and proud. All these things beckon me to retirement," he wrote to Blatchford. This was the same

Blatchford who had organized the syndicate "loan" for him in 1839: therefore the proposal of withdrawal may have been made with the reservation, as before, that he would be willing to stay if it were made financially possible. On the other hand it may have been genuine. He did not retire, but he did go back to Marshfield with the "green bag" full of Mexican claims, which, he hoped, might improve his fortunes as the touch of the salt sand revived his spirits and his health.

Neither at Marshfield nor elsewhere could he escape the Sphinx-riddle of Slavery. Abolitionism was no longer an issue that could be dodged or suppressed. It had grown mighty upon the strong meat of persecution. Meetings were mobbed, printing offices looted, schools legislated out of existence, and zealots murdered. Grand juries denounced the anti-Slavery movement as incendiary. Churches and halls were closed to meetings. Religious denominations banned the movement. The Methodist Church censured two of its clergy for addressing anti-Slavery meetings. Said a Presbyterian mouthpiece of orthodoxy, addressing his "dear Christian brethren": "If there be any stray goat among you tainted with the bloodhound principles of abolition, let him be ferreted out, excommunicated, and left to the public." Espousal of the cause of Abolitionism meant, in Boston, social exclusion, even for an aristocrat such as Charles Sumner.

Abolitionists were the "Reds" of the period, committed to the principle of the destruction of property. "They are bastards," said that polished gentleman, Sam Houston of Texas, to the Senate, voicing a popular sentiment. True to tried, trusted and invariably ineffectual American usage, the House of Representatives sat upon the safety valve by refusing for several years to receive any petition or memorial opposing Slavery.

The South, which began by being moderate, even apologetic about the excesses and injustices of the institution, now declared it the cornerstone of the Republican edifice. Demands were made upon the North for the eradication of Abolitionism. One State passed a law forbidding any person to teach a slave to read or write. In the District of Columbia the penalty for stealing a slave was death. Northern jails were requisitioned; free-state officers impressed into service for the capture and return of runaway (and sometimes freed) blacks. Retaliation took the form of Northern legislation interdicting the use of the law's machinery for such purposes. The pathetic and, it is to be feared, often overdrawn picture of the fugitive slave, hunted and harried by the slouch-hatted, whip-wielding sheriff's bloodhounds, began to get on the nerves of the moderates. Southern arrogance was answered by Northern resentment. It must be said that the Abolitionists were not exactly milky with human kindness.



THE UNATTAINABLE GOAL

From a contemporary cartoon.

(Reproduced by courtesy of New York Public Library)

They openly attacked the Constitution as "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell." Many were outspoken disunionists. "I am an Abolitionist and therefore for the dissolution of the Union," proclaimed Garrison. Their journalism exhibited a vehemence and venom for which I can find no present parallel. Their word of mouth was as intemperate and provocative as their word of print. Stephen S. Foster thus expressed his feelings. "Of Mr. Tyler's Cabinet, a majority are negro-thieves; five of the judges of the Supreme Court are negro-thieves; the President of the United States is a negro-thief," etc. In plain fact and legality, the Abolitionists were often negro-thieves: the Underground Railroad whereby escaped slaves were passed from station to station and ultimately across the Canada border was, in effect, an organized violation of the law. The Rev. Theodore Parker of Boston, harboring one of the fugitives in his cellar, wrote his sermon "with a sword in the open drawer under my ink-stand and a pistol in the flap of the desk, loaded and ready for defense."

Movements are glorified by their martyrs; they are judged by their bigots. To Daniel Webster's Constitutional and legislative mind, political extremists were naturally distasteful. One could be anti-Slavery without embracing radical Abolitionism. Least said, soonest mended. "No resolutions," he had dictated to one convention, called to consider the question.

Minimization of the issue had been his policy. Now so great a hue and cry was being raised by the fanatics, that he reluctantly foresaw the necessity of positive action, and resented it. Their "loathsome ebullitions" disgusted him. "Northern Abolitionists and Free Soilers and Southern disunionists are the most reckless men, I think, I ever met with in public life." But the faction, not yet an effective party but threatening to become one, had demonstrated its power by defeating Clay in one campaign and preventing his nomination in the next. They were a force; a malign and unpredictable force, to be reckoned with. What they had done to Clay, they might yet do to Webster. How to meet the trend of Northern opinion toward them and still maintain the goodwill of the Southern Whigs? There was no help in the party declarations, for the Whig platform had dodged the issue.

Webster's attitude had been defined not once, but many times. Slavery he would support because he must; it was embodied in the Constitution. Its extension he would oppose as morally wrong, politically inadvisable, and legally unconstitutional. In 1847 he had taken an unequivocal stand on the matter of the Wilmot Proviso, barring slavery from any territory acquired from Mexico.

"Did I not commit myself in 1838 to the whole doctrine fully, entirely? And I must be

permitted to say that I cannot quite consent that more recent discoverers should claim the merit and take out a patent. . . . Allow me to say, sir, it is not their thunder."

The bulk of his party, in spite of the uneasiness aroused by the *Creole* correspondence and the "sad concessions, vainly made" of his swing around the South, still believed him committed irrevocably against any giving of ground to the pro-Slavery element. They could trust him to oppose any and all compromise.

Massachusetts' favorite son; there he stands. There he stood when Henry Clay announced to a hushed and hopeful Senate that measure which was to be, in the optimistic opinion of its proponent, an amicable composition of all questions growing out of the subject of Slavery, and which, in fact, precipitated an eight months' legislative battle of unprecedented fury and disruption. It provided for the establishment of territorial governments in New Mexico and the other recently acquired regions, the payment of the Texas debt (largely a graft measure and calculated to profit the Congressional investors in "Texan scrip"), the determination of the Texas boundary, the admission of California as a State, restrictions in the slave trade in the District of Columbia, the passage of a stringent Fugitive Slave Law, and a formal denial that Congress

had any power over the slave trade between States. No provisions for or against Slavery were to accompany the admission of the new state or territories. It was intended to cut the ground from under the more equitable "President's measure" advanced by Taylor. It insured Texas to the slave-holders and left the remainder so open that the earlier phrase of the Congressional wit, Tom Corwin, applied to the status of California, might have been cited again: "We are asked to enact not a law but a lawsuit."

As a compromise, the Clay proposal was ninety per cent for Slavery with a ten per cent sop to the Free Soilers. It rested upon the assumption that Northern timidity and inertia would yield to Southern threats, open or implied, of secession. What could Webster, the mouthpiece of the North, do but oppose it with all the force of his logic, his leadership, and his lifelong convictions?

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RECRUIT

AN informal conference of Southern members of Congress sat considering Mr. Clay's compromise bill. There was but one opinion.

"We shall have a long battle over it."

"And of uncertain issue."

"The President will bring his influence to bear against us."

"We shall need our heaviest guns," said Mr. Clay from his corner. "I cannot carry the burden alone. I am not the man that I was."

After courteous murmurs of dissent, a Senator said: "We must have a voice, a spokesman, powerful and authoritative upon the floor of the Senate to be in charge of the debate."

"Mr. Calhoun," suggested a Congressman.

"He will not live to see the measure pass—or fail," said a voice, sorrowfully.

"Moreover, he is opposed to us. If slavery be modified, he is for disunion."

"Lewis Cass?"

"Not strong enough. A defeated candidate."

"If possible, however, we should select a Northern man."

"Why not Daniel Webster?"

There followed an excited mingling of responses. Skepticism and incredulity were the burden of the comment. A curt sentence cut through the pother.

"He wishes to be President."

"A respectable ambition," observed Clay with a smile. "I have even cherished it, myself."

"Without Southern votes he cannot hope for the nomination," pursued the proponent.

"And well he knows it."

"The South is not ungrateful to its friends."

"Mr. Webster has not been consistently a friend to the South," an objector put forth.

"Mr. Webster has not been *consistently* a friend to anything."

"All of us must change with changing conditions," pointed out Clay charitably.

"Are we to bargain with him with Southern votes as the price?"

"The South will never be for him," declared a dogmatic voice. "He has injured us too much in the matter of slavery."

"But is he as extreme or well-convinced as he formerly was?" questioned another slyly.

"There are others, loyal and true Whigs, who deserve better of the party than Mr. Webster."

Some one invoked the ghost of long-dead John Ran-

dolph's epigram: " 'I also know that with one bone I can call five hundred dogs.' "

"Our eloquent friend expects Southern votes. On what other ground can his journey through our region be accounted for? If opportunity is presented for him to make himself serviceable to our cause, I, for one, believe that he will seize it."

"And stultify himself in his opposition to slavery? I have here an extract from a speech of his two years ago." The speaker read with emphasis:

> " 'My opposition to the increase of slavery in the country, or to the increase of slave representation in Congress is general and universal. I shall oppose all such extension against all compromises.' "

"Why, the man is no better than an Abolitionist!"

" 'Increase of slavery . . . extension of slavery,' " quoted Clay. "My bill does not necessarily either increase or extend slavery."

"But it opens the way for its extension. Otherwise, I am opposed to it."

"Quite a different matter—to a lawyer's mind," said Clay blandly.

"*Tempora mutantur.* Worthy ambition often mollifies the views of statesmen," offered an oracular person. "Mr. Webster spoke true gospel in the *Creole* case."

"And he hates the Abolitionists as heartily as we do."

"Mr. Webster is first of all a Unionist. If it be apparent that secession will follow unjust restrictions, he will find in that a convenient pretext for abandoning his opposition to slavery."

"Not that he loves Liberty less, but Union more," suggested a would-be wit.

"Thad Stevens has been whispering about that he has seen a draft of a speech by Mr. Webster opposing Mr. Clay's compromise, lock, stock and barrel."

"That speech, however, has not yet been delivered," observed Clay dryly.

"Do you intend us to understand that he may abandon the project?"

"And the anti-Slavery cause?"

"It would be a fine kick-in-the-rear for the Abolitionists and nigger-lovers."

"Mr. Webster," said Clay with his fine smile, "is an astute gentleman who looks before he leaps."

"If he desires evidence of the danger of secession we can furnish him a-plenty."

"The Nashville Convention, for example."

The members looked dubiously at one another. There was a general impression that the Nashville convocation of States to consider separation from the Union was more of a threat than a danger.

"*Brutum fulmen*," murmured a too-frank conferee.

"But there may yet be lightning behind that empty thunder," retorted Clay.

"Secession is not so near as it was when Mr. Clay's Compromise Tariff bill averted it," pointed out a member. "Mr. Webster voted against that."

"He had no incentive to vote for it. It is for us to provide the incentive in this instance."

"Gentlemen, Mr. Clay is the man to manage this delicate negotiation. It is notorious that he can do anything with Mr. Webster."

Mr. Clay made a deprecatory gesture. It were better, he thought, to have several gentlemen call upon the Massachusetts leader. However, he would be glad to make a preliminary visit and pave the way.

So it was done. All of the Kentuckian's persuasiveness, all of that semi-hypnotic influence which he exercised over his intellectual superior, was brought into play. Clay was a spent man, staggering with exhaustion and age when the interview was over; but he had brought his rival to his way of thinking on every important point. The more formal meeting was in the nature of a confirmation, a month later. A Washington correspondent got wind of it and wrote:

> "Several Southern members of Congress had a long and interesting interview with Mr. Webster."

It was after this publication that the Senator announced his intent to "make a Union Speech and discharge a clear conscience."

The South had captured the North's biggest gun, and at no cost to itself.

Later there was a dinner of celebration. Senator Preston of South Carolina, exultant over the fair prospect of victory with such a recruit to their ranks—perhaps a bit overexultant—proposed a toast.

"Daniel Webster, gentlemen; a Northern man with Southern principles."

This was a little too much. "The great stone face" was grim as its owner rose to accept the distasteful compliment. Southern principles? Certainly, of a kind. He acknowledged the ascription with a bow to the Chairman.

"Sir, do I ever leave a heel-tap in my glass? Do I ever pay my debts? Don't I always prefer challenging a man who won't fight?"

He sat down and drained his glass with a wry expression. It was a foretaste of bitterer dregs to follow.

CHAPTER XXV

THE POLITICIAN'S BID

ALONE among all efforts of American oratory, Daniel Webster's speech on the Compromise bill takes its traditional title from the date which it made memorable. It is as definitely the "Seventh of March Speech" as Independence Day is the Fourth of July.

Clay's measure, which was to have calmed the angry passions of North and South, had only exasperated them. In the House members went armed. There were rumors of forcible raids upon the Senate. Men's tempers were set on hair-triggers. At one point in the Compromise debate that old war-horse of the Senate, Benton, jumped from his seat and advanced upon Foote. Foote drew a pistol. "Assassin, assassin!" shouted Benton, struggling against those who had seized him. Foote cried out that he was small and feeble and bore arms on the advice of friends. Officially called upon to apologize and promise to be good, both firmly refused. The matter was referred to a committee and so died. There were no other deaths.

The Senate was dominantly Southern in sentiment and force. The Northern group was, in the severe

words of one of its own number, "tame, indolent, and pusillanimous." Seward might have added that they were vacillating, divided and sub-divided, and uncertain of their ground. To these men Webster was to address the greatest effort, the most daring venture of his life. They must be persuaded in the interests of the Union (as Webster had been persuaded to persuade himself) that acceptance of the Compromise was the one and only way to avert secession and war.

Announcement of a speech on the vital question of the day, by the first orator of the nation, crowded the galleries and the floor. Webster rose in his place "like an elephant getting to its feet; like a vast upheaval of earth." So a vivid reporter described it; he looked "like a transparent bronze statue brilliantly lighted from within." He wore the brass-buttoned bright blue coat and "particularly buff waistcoat," that costume which advertised a special ebullition of patriotism and which foreboded "an explosion which kills always somebody." This time it was the orator himself whom it was to kill in the love and faith of those in the North who had looked to him to stand by his own and their principles.

What desperate courage, engendered by a desperation of ambition, that venture must have required! Before that waiting, speculating, rumor-swept crowd he was to deliver his great recantation and make it appear, if eloquence, special pleading and casuistry could

do so, a reaffirmation of his creed. Back of him were pledges, public and private, of his unyielding opposition to slavery. Less than two years before he had written to a friend, "You need not fear that I shall vote for any compromise or do anything inconsistent with the past." Now he was advancing to the support of a compromise which was no less than a surrender, under pressure of fear, to the principle of slavery. The Wilmot Proviso he had formally adopted; it was his "thunder." But under the sway of Clay's hypnotic arguments, he had assured the Kentuckian that the Proviso was "no shibboleth" to him; and now he must publicly abandon it. Most dangerous of all, he had acceded to the strengthening of the Fugitive Slave Law, the most bitterly hated and resented measure ever written into our national system; and the most flagrantly disobeyed up to the day of the Volstead Act. The Compromise agreement made it a felony for any citizen to refuse aid to a slave-chasing officer. Even the most conservative element in the North revolted from the shame of delivering up an escaped human being to bondage. If it were nothing nobler, there was at least a feeling of sportsmanship, almost universal, that the quarry should have its fair chance. This sentiment, as well as the more profound and glowing impulses of humanity, Webster must, perforce, outrage in the task to which he had set himself.

The Senate body upon which he looked with anx-

ious eyes was made up of a later era than his own. Only two men were present who had been in the national arena when he entered, thirty-seven long years before: Clay and King. Calhoun had exhausted himself a few days before, sponsoring a speech which he was too feeble to deliver, and nodding his gaunt and gloomy head when Mason, reading for him, delivered his own forebodings that the South might be unable to remain in the Union "with safety and honor"; he was believed to be unable to attend. Webster thought it fitting to speak a regretful and complimentary word about his absence. He turned his kindly phrase, mentioning the Senator from South Carolina as not being there. A hollow voice said deeply:

"He *is* here."

The Northerner looked into the newly arrived Southerner's burning eyes. What was behind that grim, composed expression? Thirty-five years before, the Puritan of Secession had impugned Webster's trustworthiness. Had he come hither from a death-bed to confirm at the last that enduring and chill prejudice? The speaker capped his compliment with an expression of gratification.

Few in that assemblage knew what Webster's course would be and those few had kept the secret well. His phrase "make a Union speech and discharge a clear conscience" could be interpreted as one pleased. More than a clear conscience is requisite for a confident pres-

entation of a risky cause. With his uncanny power of justifying himself to himself for any shift of course or principle, he would, I think, have been quite easy in his soul as to the righteousness of his course; but to justify himself to his followers was another matter. He was indeed, as he afterward told Winthrop, "engaged in a controversy of great moment to be fought on a field in which I had neither a leader nor a follower from among my own immediate friends."

He began haltingly, a not unusual defect of his oratory. As he established his position—the position which he wished his hearers to accept—of speaking for the whole nation and not a section, his utterance was more fluent. His main argument was brilliantly presented: he skirted the difficulties lightly; he bore strongly upon the inherent improbability of the new States beyond Texas declaring for slavery. But when he reached the inevitable obstacle of the Wilmot Proviso, he labored again. His sentences, as well formed as ever, were jerked forth irregularly with hiatuses strangely spaced between parts of the one phrase: "Wilmot—[long pause]—Proviso." His manner was "painfully laborious. Great drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead and face suggesting . . . a very recent or heavy dinner or troubled conscience." At the close he recovered again. There was the old majesty in the final periods.

But no storm of applause rewarded him when he sat

down heavily. The Chamber was too intent, perhaps too astonished for that. Circles of men drew together, buzzing, whispering, surmising. Clay was smiling. Benton frowned. Calhoun had been supported to the lobby before the close; he never came back. He died on the last day of the month. Seward, very grave, was making notes for his reply. Whether the New Yorker then knew it or not, with that eloquent abdication the conscience of the moderate anti-Slavery North abandoned Webster and passed to his leadership. Mangum, Mason and King were consulting closely. There was an angry commotion in the gallery. Some one had growled out "Traitor!" The orator slumped in his seat, dully responsive to the congratulations pressed upon him by some of the Southerners. He had entered upon that period and into that prolonged crisis when for months he never knew surcease from "a crushing weight of anxiety and responsibility . . . the feeling of eating care."

Events moved forward with enormous tumult and turmoil, like the current of a great river impeded in its course by powerful obstructions. Seward answered Webster with that quiet and deadly heretical phrase "a higher law than the Constitution" which so rankled in the Great Defender's spirit. The Compromise seemed doomed. A Committee of Thirteen, from both North and South, was summoned to revivify it. Their "Omnibus bill" was but the Clay measure,

slightly altered. It, too, languished and would perhaps have followed its predecessor, but for a startling turn of the political wheel.

Zachary Taylor, who had proved himself a far better President than the nation had a right to expect, and was tremendously popular, was rumored to be seriously ill with a dyspepsia. On a hot day of July, he had drunk his fill of ice water, eaten a bag of cherries, followed those up with a number of pawpaws, assuaged the resultant thirst with a pitcher of iced milk, and after a gallant struggle on the part of his aged but still active stomach, died a logical if not strictly natural death, on July 8th. "Plunged in mourning" is a term loosely applied to any nation in time of public bereavement. In the case of Taylor it was literally true. The country was grief-stricken, without respect to party or section.

Millard Fillmore, the Vice-President, was known to be friendly to the Clay plan which, upon his succession, took on new vigor. Nevertheless, the result was so uncertain that its sponsors feared to bring it to a vote. Webster made further speeches, vindicating and defending himself, with great though somewhat painful ingenuity, against the thronging charges of inconsistency. The closing sentence of the final one, his last appearance on the floor of the Senate, has a special interest.

"No man can suffer too much or fall too soon if

he suffer or if he fall in defense of the liberties and Constitution of his country."

In 1802 a country schoolmaster of Fryeburg, Me., had thus ended his Fourth of July oration:

> "Above fear, above danger, he feels that the last end which can happen to any man never comes too soon if he falls in defense of the laws and liberties of his country."

Daniel Webster, the statesman, repeats Daniel Webster, the youthful pedagogue. Whether he improves upon his earlier eloquence, is another matter.

When the Omnibus bill finally failed, it left its component parts very much alive. One by one they were forced through to passage, with few bold enough to oppose; California, New Mexico and Utah open to slave-holders if they should so elect; ten millions for the discredited Texas scrip, and finally the Fugitive Slave Law which so stank in the nostrils of the North. So many timid souls fled the final vote on it, that Thaddeus Stevens, in the House, moved a general notification of temporary absentees by the pages "that they can return with safety as the Slavery question has been disposed of."

Webster exulted when victory became assured. He drafted notes, as he says (which probably means that

he wrote the matter), for an editorial which appeared in his favorite outlet of anonymous expression, the *National Intelligencer*, under the caption, "The Question Settled," dealing with the admission of California.

"Hail, Liberty and Union, and Domestic Peace! Hail, Liberty and Union, and every great interest of the country! Hail the return of the Government from its long aberration back to its just sphere of action and usefulness!

"Our first feeling is one of thankfulness to Providence for this important first step in the restoration of National harmony. Our next sentiment is one of high respect and gratitude toward those who have persevered with such unflinching resolution through this most trying struggle of the last six months, 'unseduced,' 'unterrified.' They have encountered great responsibility and they have encountered it cheerfully: they have made great personal sacrifices—at least some of them—and they have made such sacrifices promptly, and with entire disregard of personal consequences. Distant, far distant, be the day when such patriotic efforts, sustained by such extraordinary ability and energy, will be forgotten by the people of the United States."

But Seward was sadly reflecting upon Webster's vote against the Wilmot Proviso, that "the cause of freedom had betrayers enough without him."

"Freedom's banner trails in the dust at Washington," cried Thurlow Weed's *Albany Journal.* And the Northern press in general echoed the lament for a lost leader and a cause betrayed.

CHAPTER XXVI

AFTERMATH

THE Seventh of March Speech made Daniel Webster the foremost figure in American politics. Once before, after the reply to Hayne, he had enjoyed that splendid notoriety. Now he was even more conspicuous in public notice. Clay, the real author of the Compromise plan, was forgotten. The fine old soldier, patiently working himself into debility in the White House, was dwarfed. The Defender of the Constitution, the Upholder of the Union, was hailed in some quarters, hated in others, as the adjuster (or muddler) of the ticklish situation; the beneficent (or quack) healer of old and festering sores. By the end of the month 120,000 copies of the address had been circulated on the four winds.

Response flooded in. To the house on D Street, as well as to his Senate quarters, came messengers staggering under the heavy burden of letters, newspapers, and clippings. No man could have read them all and continued his daily tasks. Day after day his secretary, Charles Lanman, or some of his faithful friends would bring to him heartening evidences of adherence,

praise and recognition, carefully selected from the mass.

After the first shock of surprise, Boston, led by its Solid Men, swung to him. Business was honestly and logically for the Compromise. Terrified by the possibility of war, it let itself be overawed by the skillful propaganda of threat organized by the more vociferous element of the Southern press. The Southern market, both profitable and vengeful, had backed the bill with intimations that opposition to it would entail loss of trade. A New York concern which retorted by advertising "Our goods are for sale but not our principles" had suffered reprisals. Evidently the South meant what it said. Secession must be avoided at any cost, and, to the business mind, the Clay-Webster plan was the easiest and fairest way. To swallow the Fugitive Slave provision was a strain; but if it must be done, it must.

On the other side were the noisy Abolitionists who put themselves out of court in Massachusetts by formally petitioning for the right to secede peaceably. Boston's best were back of Webster, and let him know it in terms of the warmest loyalty. Not only that, but they had made the *Boston Courier*, which, as a Whig organ, should have supported the Massachusetts Senator but had at first been "unable to find that any Northern Whig member of Congress concurs with Mr. Webster," reverse its attitude in a hurry, and state editorially:

"Mr. Webster's course requires no apology with those who examine calmly and deliberately; it is the true argument, the whole argument, and the only argument."

Eight hundred of Boston's leading citizens sent him a memorial of congratulation. There was a public message from New York attesting the adherence of the "Citizens of this Commercial Capital." The learned Dr. Stuart of Andover, at great length and with deep erudition, justified his course by unimpeachable citations from the Scriptures. A new lot of honorary elections—were there still societies of which he was not a complimentary member?—came flooding in. His old witch-descended enemy, Ike Hill, wrote a letter so warm, so friendly, so generous in admiration, that his own generous heart could not but forgive the ancient injuries. Most practical of all, the capitalist, W. W. Corcoran, who had bought the Swann mansion from him and who held his notes for nearly $6,000, sent him the canceled paper as a token of esteem, and topped this with a cash gift of more than $1,000.

In the response from his own New England he could not but be a little disappointed. Opposition from certain quarters he had foreseen, but not lukewarmness in the house of his friends. Such party journals as the *Portsmouth Journal* and the *Keene*

Sentinel grudged their support, though with cautious praise of his efforts for peace. The Whig *Boston Advertiser* was dubious about his policy, while recognizing his "devotion to the interests of the nation." The *Boston Atlas*, which had been his reliable defender in the past, jarred him severely by its reception of the speech:

> "We would not disagree with the views which one so distinguished entertains if we could help it. In the present instance we cannot agree with Mr. Webster. His sentiments are not our sentiments. They are not, we venture to say, the sentiments of the Whigs of New England."

From elsewhere more favorable echoes of the speech gratified his ears. New York was specially responsive. To be sure, the *Tribune* considered it "unequal to the occasion and unworthy of its author," and the *Tribune* was powerful. From the *Evening Post* nothing but detraction was to be looked for; nevertheless it need not be viciously abusive. "Traitorous retreat" was a libelous phrase. And there was stark injustice in the accusation,

> "Mr. Webster stands before the public as a man who has deserted the cause which he lately defended . . . under circumstances which force upon him the imputation of a sordid motive . . .

and immediately after an office has been conferred upon his son, to say nothing of what has been done by the administration for his other relatives."

After all, who cared what that rancid scold, Mr. W. C. Bryant, said? It was he who had abused Nicholas Biddle, dead, by snarling editorially that he ought to have ended his days in the penitentiary. One could ignore such a person.

How different his good friend Webb, who now stood staunchily by him, even though Webster had been unable to oblige him with that $50,000! His *Courier & Inquirer* declared that the Webster effort had established him more firmly as the Defender of the Constitution, being "of the same conservative, constitutional, patriotic and national character as have hitherto characterized his senatorial efforts." But to make it the basis for an editorial demanding more stringent laws for the return of fugitive slaves was impolitic. That way danger lurked.

The *New York Morning Star* praised it as "a speech of immense power and interest" and deemed it more likely to "terminate all difficulties with the South than any plan yet proposed." It foresaw difficulties in the North and East, but thought that the South ought to give support. Good! Not so good, yet not adverse, the *Commercial Advertiser*, which

thought that the statesman had rehashed old material with great skill and deserved praise for his realistic attempt to tide over a difficult crisis.

But it was the *Herald* editorial which made the statesman glow with a sense of true appreciation.

> "The scathing which Webster gives to the Wilmot Proviso and incidentally to the Free Soil agitators of the Whig and Democratic parties, is the most severe thing of the kind we have ever read."

And the paper went on record as believing that the great orator's nomination for the Presidency would be acceptable to the South.

That was what he liked to read! That, coming from an influential journal (even though its editor was openly called a blackmailer and occasionally horsewhipped in the public streets), was of real service.

Washington had not disappointed him. The *National Intelligencer* found that "The public voice all around us, as far as it could be heard and from persons from all sections of the Union, expressed no feeling but that of gratification." It considered that the address added "fresh luster to the fame of the great orator and gave fresh proofs of his truly national and patriotic spirit."

Equally satisfactory was the *Washington Union:*

"Mr. Webster has had the moral courage to risk himself for his country. . . . This powerful and manly speech is the lion of the day."

But it was from the South that he most anxiously awaited returns. Here again disappointment was his portion. Too many of the newspapers treated the whole matter as if it were Mr. Clay's thunder and not his own. Too many failed to devote more than a casual mention to this, the culminating effort and venture of his career, whereon he had staked his future. But the powerful and moderate *New Orleans Picayune*, which had briefly dismissed Clay's bill as an olive branch to the South, spread the Seventh of March Speech over its front page. It surmised that he had shocked the prejudices of New England, and eulogized him for "the moral courage to do what he believes just in itself and necessary for the peace and safety of the country." From the Northern end of the slavery area, the *Richmond Times* welcomed the "abandonment of the slavery restriction in the Territorial government" and hailed the address as "more than great, sublime."

But no Southern journal that he saw contributed that endorsement of Daniel Webster as the South's presidential hope for which his eyes yearned. Not one.

Clouds of wrath were gathering from another quar-

ter. Though the keener minds of the North, such as Adams, Sumner and Seward, had long forecast or suspected Webster's trend to slavery, the rank and file of the Free Soilers believed the Great Constitutionalist to be of their creed at heart, and in spite of evidences of his wavering, they held to the faith that when the issues should be clearly marked and the division inevitable, he would commit himself, as he had so eloquently done in the past, to the humanitarian cause. Their rage, when self-deception could no longer blink the facts, was the measure of their disillusion.

The Abolitionist press fulminated. "The scarlet infamy of Daniel Webster," held up to hatred by the "National Anti-Slavery Standard," would hardly have roused the anger of the subject; he was too accustomed to this sort of partisan violence, and to such diatribes as:

> "Many a specimen of ground and lofty tumbling has been presented in the political ring at Washington, but no harlequin there has ever yet turned so agile or so complete a somerset as has the Godlike Defender of the Constitution."

But the stab of private pens would go deeper. For the comity of the "Mutual Admiration Society" of New England writers, "that magnanimous cabal which has so long controlled the destinies of American

letters in conducting the thing called the *North American Review*" (to quote Poe in one of his moments of pettishness), he had always felt a longing, and he knew that they admired his intellectual powers. But almost to a man, they were haters of slavery in all its phases and manifestations. Their bitter commentaries upon his course drifted back to him on currents of malice. Lowell had been deriding him in the *Standard;* that he could endure. But Longfellow, unpublished, hurt more than his fellow-poet in print:

> "Is it possible? Is this the Titan who hurled mountains at Hayne years ago? . . . Fallen, fallen, fallen from his high estate."

More hurtful still the restrained contempt of Emerson:

> "Every drop of blood in that man's veins has eyes that look downward."

And Sumner's calm judgment:

> "Mr. Webster has done more than all others to break down the North."

There were rumors of a poem written by Whittier, the kindly, charitable-souled Quaker. It could not be anything very harsh or bitter, deriving from that source; regretful perhaps, but not unjust. Yet his friends shied away from any mention of it. Then one

day it reached his eyes—that terrible and noble invective "Ichabod," beside which Swinburne's best vehemence is petty rancor and Browning's "Lost Leader" a feeble jingle; one of the lonely monuments of supreme emotion in the voice of a supreme simplicity:

> So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
> Which once he wore!
> The glory from his gray hairs gone
> Forever more!

He read it, somber and shaken, to the lines:

> When faith is lost, when honor dies,
> The man is dead.

The clipping dropped from his hand. There were men, men of gentle heart, of kindly thought, who could so think of him, Daniel Webster! We can imagine him staring, hollow-eyed, at a new and dreadful presentment of himself, such as no painter of them all had ever glimpsed beneath the noble exterior:

> A bright soul, driven
> Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark
> From hope and heaven!

Had he made a dreadful misstep? The revulsion of sentiment against him grew harsher than he could have believed. In opposition to the odious Fugitive Slave Act, the North now invoked the "higher law than the Constitution." Beyond doubt, the "blood-

hound proviso" was the sore spot. He had seen himself caricatured as a canine demon, slavering on the trail of the fleeing negro. That was a poisoned shaft.

Would he have done better to oppose the whole measure, hook, line, bob and sinker, as he had considered doing? Had Clay led him into a trap where he would be helpless against the gathering wrath of his own section?

There is some evidence that his espousal of the Compromise plan was a total reversal of an intent not only pondered but formulated and committed to paper after he had first learned of Clay's measure. Thaddeus Stevens and Giddings of Ohio, who were frequently in consultation with Webster, understood that he was to oppose the Clay Compromise, and they were reported as having seen the draft of his speech which the latter deemed "the ablest and most powerful exposition and vindication of Northern sentiment that has ever been uttered." When the Great Defender came out on the other side, Stevens was incredulous. Until a full report was shown to him, he refused to believe.

At this crucial period of his career, the inevitable harassment of financial troubles again beset the statesman. Suits were being filed against him on old notes —bad business for a candidate. There was too much editorial innuendo about "golden chains" and the marketing of his notes for a few cents on the dollar.

Court proceedings against him would make effective campaign material for the enemy. He wrote to a lawyer-cousin, Worcester Webster (who, bearing such a name, surely should have been whether or not he was, a son of the dictionary compiler): "I am in hot water. Lend a helping hand." And to Fletcher, who now had the Surveyorship of the Port of Boston (the veteran father of dependent daughters having been otherwise provided for) and should have been in a position to look after himself:

> "But really I have no money nor could I raise any, now, in any way that I know of. . . . I have earned a good deal of money, within the last year, but it has all been paid away, either on Mr. Frothingham's mortgage or on those old debts which we once thought had been provided for. . . . As to the Mexican claims, things look fair at present; but nothing can be pocketed from that source for some time."

His besetting vice of "acceptances," issued to satisfy creditors from whom he had bought more land in the East, was bringing its sure penalties. Once more he must, perforce, be at the old, humiliating business of beggary. The familiar and effective argument of his inability to afford public service unless he were aided would do as well as any, and his banker friend of many years was the natural source to tap.

State Street could not afford to let him go, and if he must stay, they must pay. To Franklin Haven, in the week following the Seventh of March Speech, he made his appeal:

> "Three or four years ago there was a talk among friends in Boston of taking some measures to arrange those old debts which were hanging over me, at that time. Some schemes were suggested; among which one was to interest me in some shares in the Phila. & Baltimore R. R. in the hope that a rise in those shares would make a profit. Unhappily, I believe, there has been little or no rise. Meantime the burden falls on Mr. Mills. Now the question is whether anything can be done by means of my Mexican scrip, or otherwise. I would not trouble you too much about my affairs; but I cannot well stay here unless I get into a condition in which I can 'Breathe more freely.' Think of these things at a leisure moment. Yrs,
>
> "D. W."

Something was presumably arranged. Boston finance seems to have possessed resilient qualities of patience, as well as a lasting appreciativeness. The favorite son maintained his place in public life.

Fortunate for him that he did so, for the unforeseen change in the Presidency altered his prospects

materially. The death of one Chief Magistrate had intercepted his advance at a time when his path to the White House seemed clearest. Now this second tragedy pointed the way for him again. Millard Fillmore, the "man of hesitation and double opinions," as the anti-Slavery Whigs deemed him, was at the head of affairs. He would favor the Compromise; it would be carried in one form or another; and Webster would be established as its champion. This would be better campaign material than the Ashburton Treaty, because it would align in his support the South which he had hitherto failed to bind to himself.

Fillmore offered him the State Department, which he accepted. If there was no such glory in sight as when he had taken over the office under Tyler, neither were there such difficulties and dangers. His influence would be dominant, he believed, in the Cabinet. Others believed it, too, some with forebodings.

"The government is in the hands of Mr. Webster," wrote Seward, "and Mr. Clay is its organ in Congress."

Two years in the future loomed the convention of 1852. What other candidate in the field could seriously contest the Illustrious Defender's title to the party's gratitude?

Once again Sisyphus set his shoulder hopefully to the rock.

CHAPTER XXVII

TROUBLED WATERS

WITH the newest slavery crisis postponed, perhaps settled by the Compromise, and the Whigs, docile to the leadership of their accidental President, the Secretary of State could turn to his new task with a freed spirit. Many of his old subordinates were still in the Department. They welcomed him back with unfeigned satisfaction. He had left behind him a fine tradition of respect and affection, earned by his habitual courtesy, consideration and goodwill toward those under his genially easy authority. This was, I think, one of the happy phases of his late years, the last, except for brief interludes. The President was amenable to his influence and advice. He was enlarging his new house in expectation of a long stay. He was prepared to endure with a steady heart and a controlled temper, the abuse and defamation of the extremists; his reward was that the best thought of the nation, as he saw it, was recognizing his wisdom and swinging to his views. Marshfield was far away; but the fishing was good up-river and he took many a fine bass from the quick riffles below the Falls of the Potomac.

Marshfield called him, but Washington claimed him. If no such prime achievement as the Ashburton Treaty marked his second incumbency of the State Department, nevertheless he contributed one major and permanent service, in definitely convincing the obstinacy of John Bull that America intended henceforth to maintain the rights of her seamen at any cost. When, in the Cuban embroilment, England proposed to send a fleet overseas to protect Cuba, the Secretary of State gave her to understand "that the first attempt to execute those orders by visiting an American ship, or in any other way interrupting our commerce, would lead to immediate war." This, following the official and general notification that the American flag would be the adequate protection of the crew beneath it, terminated the arrogant absurdity of the British "right of search." Toward the most formidable of powers he could be as stiff-necked as you please; in dealing with a weaker nation he would be scrupulous. When some premature imperialists wished to claim the Lobos Islands from Peru, he avowed himself "exceedingly unwilling to entrench on the rights either legal or equitable of a smaller power." In the light of such magnanimity, his backing and filling when Kossuth visited Washington, and his bullyragging of the tactless and plaintive Austrian Minister, Hülsemann, are unimportant.

As a statesman, he was serving his country well; as

a politician he was less effective in his own interests. Since his Seventh of March Speech the Massachusetts portents had become less and less auspicious. For five years or more he had followed the policy at home of smothering where he could, deprecating where he could not suppress, all agitation of the Slavery question. So insistently had he employed the soft pedal at Whig conventions that two of his confidential biographers, despairing of reconciling this course with their portraiture of a courageous and open-dealing patriot, totally omit his addresses on these occasions. In this policy of hush he had been able to carry his party with him. Now that the Clay Compromise had brought him out into the open, his control was gravely endangered.

His own State Legislature was on record, opposing any compromise with Slavery. (So was he, for that matter, unfortunately.) He went back to Boston and made a speech very different in tone from the grim and brave defiance of his earlier challenge to the disaffected Whigs when he told them that he was a little hard to coax but quite insusceptible of coercion. Now he was brief, cautious, and for him indecisive.

What his State officially thought of his attitude was promptly expressed by the Legislature, which went on record with a demand for such a Fugitive Slave enactment as should be sustained by public opinion, and for jury trial of the reclaimed black. No Northern jury,

it was notorious, would ever convict such a prisoner. The Senator from Massachusetts saw the writing on the wall. Returning to the Capital, he half-heartedly presented a bill which he claimed to have drawn four months previously, embodying this nullifying qualification. He never pressed it.

Why? Did Clay rebuke him for his abortive apostasy? Was there whip-cracking by the Southern Whigs whose favor he was assiduously courting by lavish entertainments? Soon he was apologetically explaining to his constituents:

> "I have considered the subject with a conscientious desire to provide for such jury trial if possible in order to allay excitement and remove objections. There are many difficulties, however, attending any such provision. [And he goes on to state that] nothing is more false than that such jury trial is demanded in cases of this kind by the Constitution."

He was now insisting, pleading that objections to those provisions of the Clay Compromise which had encountered the severest criticism in the North were "mere abstractions," "no matter of principle," "of no real political importance." A singular and disheartening spectacle, this, of the once autocratic leader faltering and paltering on both principle and policy. This vacillation is a new phase, perhaps marking the

inception of senile decline. It had been his habit of mind to choose a course and pursue it grimly, flouting all charges of inconsistency with previous records; not to retract and adopt, and retract again.

One of the addresses of this period of uncertainty was reported by James Russell Lowell. He thought that what success it achieved was due to the imposition of the orator's tremendous personality, when he asked the Whigs of Massachusetts, in combined appeal and challenge, what was to become of him if he was no longer to be reckoned a Faneuil Hall Whig. Where was he to go?

> "We all held our breath [wrote Lowell in his newspaper] and wondered where in the world he could go. But if he had been a little fellow, five-feet-six, we should have exclaimed, 'Who the deuce cares where you go! Only get out of the way somewhere.' "

And another lively reporter of the day, George W. Smalley, also noted that indefinable power which was so like mesmerism:

> "Whatever it was, we all bowed to it. We were there to take orders from him, to think his thoughts, to do as he would have us. He might have talked nonsense. We should not have thought it was nonsense. He might have re-

versed his policy. We should have held him consistent. The forces of the whole State were at his disposal as they had been for thirty years."

Not so completely as Smalley thought, however. There was more trouble to come, plenty of it. An Abolitionist-controlled meeting at Faneuil Hall passed resolutions which must have seemed to the Defender of the Constitution sheer anarchism.

"Constitution or no Constitution, law or no law, we will not allow a fugitive slave to be taken from the State of Massachusetts."

Here was practical application of the "higher law" heresy, with a vengeance. Not long after, Boston put that resolution into effect by a mob rescue of a recaptured slave.

The Massachusetts Senate, early in 1851, protested the Fugitive Slave Law as abhorrent and impossible of enforcement, and it was with difficulty that Webster's supporters beat the resolution in the lower house. This same legislature, after a protracted deadlock, supplanted Winthrop in the United States Senate with Charles Sumner, a whole-souled though not fanatical Abolitionist, while Horace Mann and Charles Allen, political enemies of Webster, were elected to the House. In effect this was little better than a repudiation of the Compromise and its chief supporter. Was

Massachusetts deserting her favorite son? That would be destructive. Without the backing of his own State, his chances in the convention would be mathematically nil. The threatened leadership must be reaffirmed.

Faithful adherents arranged for a "welcome" in Faneuil Hall, when he should visit Boston. From that historic rostrum of free discussion where, traditionally, any cause could be assured of a fair hearing, he could explain and justify his course to friend and enemy. The plan encountered a stunning set-back. The Board of Aldermen of Boston refused Faneuil Hall to Daniel Webster.

This was too much. In those days Boston was truly and profoundly committed to free speech. There was no prevision that one day it would seal its eyes with blinders, plug its ears with cotton, and withdraw into the timorous silences lest it might see or hear something to shock its prejudices. Such a reaction of resentment followed the attempt to shut off the accused man—he was virtually that—from his defense, that the city authorities felt the vengeance of the public at the next election, and a succeeding administration corrected the injustice.

From this time on we find a melancholy change from that amenity of public conduct which had so distinguished the Illustrious Daniel. Slavery, and especially the Fugitive Slave Law, were topics which he

could not bring himself to face equably. Seward's "higher law than the Constitution" which had so stirred the conscience of the people, roused in him the pious choler of the devotee toward the heretic and moved him to sneers. Abolitionists were "silly women and sillier men."

Adept at abuse and provocation, they kept goading the old man. A gentlemanly descendant of the Patroons, one Van Rensselaer, said in a New York meeting that what greatness Webster possessed was due to his negro blood. "He is not called Black Dan for nothing." A negro orator at an Abolitionist gathering, declared (to applause) that George Washington, slave-owner, was a scoundrel. Wendell Phillips interposed, but not in rebuke:

"If you call Washington a scoundrel, how are you going to describe Daniel Webster?"

Fire for fire. To Webster's mind the zealots of anti-Slavery were the most desperate and reckless of men, and he put himself under no restrictions in his expression of the belief. They were "mad," "fanatical," "fantastical."

He even weakened into self-pity at times, as in Buffalo where he was remounting the weary treadmill of justification.

"Gentlemen, I expect to be libeled and abused. Yes! libeled and abused. But it don't disturb

me. I have not lost a night's rest for a great many years for any such cause. I have some talent for sleeping. And why should I not expect to be libeled? Is not the Constitution of the United States libeled? Do not some people call it the production of hell? Is not Washington libeled and abused? Is he not called a bloodhound on the track of the negro?"

Too often he was as violent as the extremists among his tormentors. Sumner thought that "his course lately has been that of a madman." Those who openly interfered with the recovery of fugitive blacks he stigmatized as traitors. He said of the freeing of the negro, Shadrach, in Boston: "It was treason and nothing else." Syracuse he branded as a "laboratory of Abolitionism, libel, and treason," and when he spoke there it was to bellow threats of defiance and vengeance to his astonished audience. The response of the city came in the following fall when such "traitors" as Gerrit Smith and the Rev. Samuel J. May led a crusade that rescued the slave, Jerry, from the powerless officers of the law.

Pushed beyond his wonted bounds by his fever of resentment at such evidences of public sentiment, Webster now began to go as far in his pro-Slavery attitude as the Southern extremists. A member of Congress was no more justified, he proclaimed, in moving

a repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law than he would be in moving to tear down the Capitol, to disband the army, to burn the navy. The parallel column may excusably be invoked here in illustration of his progress in inconsistency and self-stultification.

In 1844 he said to the Massachusetts Whigs:

"The Constitution has provided nothing for the extension of slavery, and it appears to me one of the very foolish extremes into which the minds of men will sometimes run, to talk of the dissolution of the Union and the overthrow of the Constitution for either purpose —the one of the abolition, the other of the perpetuation of slave institutions."

In 1851, upholding the Fugitive Slave Law, he told a public meeting:

"For one I confess, I do not see any reasonable prospect of maintaining the Constitution of the United States, unless we maintain it as a whole, impartially, honorably, patriotically."

Rarely indeed was the illustrious man anything but kind to his inferiors. But when a farmer friend protested his course, he wrote back: "John Taylor, never write me another word upon politics."

Washington society was treated to a unique spectacle, that season. The stated occasion was Jenny Lind's concert, for a seat at which some of the lavish paid as high as six hundred dollars. The side-show was *lagniappe*—bonus for the fortunate who were

there to witness. The peerless diva had brought her artistry, her personality, and the ringing splendor of her voice to America, under the financial persuasions of Barnum, to gather a fortune. Everywhere her appearance was a social as well as (in actuality more than) a musical event. At the national Capital she was to close a classical program with "The Star Spangled Banner," that anthem so peculiarly adapted to a voice of professional range and flexibility—and to no other.

After the first stanza it was noted with some amusement, not unmingled with annoyance, that the songstress was being supported by a deep humming note from the center of the house, all on one key. The diapason was presently fortified by the tapping of a foot, in perfect measure. At the conclusion, while the house rang with acclaim, there was a stir and motion, and a massive figure moved into the aisle and down to the open space before the platform. It was recognized, to follow the felicitous usage of the day, as "a certain personage high in official life." The Swedish Nightingale came out to acknowledge the applause. The personage made her a magnificent bow. She curtsied. He bent a second time and again she acknowledged the salute. But at the third salaam, she retired to the wings.

The next day all Washington was asking where the Hon. Daniel Webster had dined on the previous eve-

ning. Madame Lind was quoted by Webster's friends later as having exclaimed in wonder and admiration: "What a man!" But the phrase "*Quel homme!*" may, in a certain tonal inflection, connote more of wonder than of admiration.

A sharp interruption to convivial habits broke in, for a time, upon the uneven tenor of his way. He had been feeling "tired and sick and good for nothing." His nerves were frazzled. Every waif wind that blew in across his papers awoke yearnings for his beloved shore acres, the companionship of his friend, Blatchford, and the blessed healing of the sea, when "we two and Durf Hatch and Dwelly Baker may be on Ned's Ground some warm, still, smoky day."

He packed and set out for home. On his way he stopped in Boston to see Dr. John Jeffries, of whom he had heard good report. Jeffries was one of those exceptional practitioners who work under the inspiration of common sense. He read the great statesman a sharp lecture on the sin of ruining a God-given constitution by intemperance in food and drink. He pitched the opium-laden diarrhea nostrum out of the window and startled his patient by explaining the peril of drug habit. "With some difficulty," as he says, he persuaded his patient to a simple regimen. Webster's native good sense accepted the physician's dictum. He was to go on a strict diet—and not too much of that. He was to leave drugs to the doctor

and drinks to the bartender. He was to stay in the country until his powerful but sorely abused body could recover itself. Six weeks at Marshfield again wrought the Antæan miracle, and for a time thereafter he was careful.

Amidst all the anxieties and irritations of self-defense, he was steadily "pointing" for his candidacy. At times he doubted whether a Cabinet position was his best vantage point. With convention time drawing nearer, he asked Haven's advice about resigning, but assured him in a later letter: "I shall do nothing, however, without the entire approbation of friends, to whom I owe so many obligations." Did the old taint of "aristocracy," of being a "Bank-man," a "ruffle-shirt," still cling about him? He signed his letters: "Your obliged brother farmer and fellow-citizen." He told his audiences: "My walks in life have been very much among the masses." He arranged for a pre-convention circulation of the Seventh of March Speech under a short title with "Union" in it; thinking it "probably the most important effort of my life and as like as any other to be often referred to." Rather pathetically he insisted upon his special and local brand of Whiggery: "I am a Faneuil Hall Whig." Some of the newspapers which had at first opposed him were coming around to a recognition of his good faith and patriotic purpose, he noted with satisfaction.

Clay was out of the running. Calhoun was dead. Seward was too moderate to have developed a strong following. Fillmore was a weak sister. Scott was a military nonentity. To whom could the Whigs of all sections, united in the easy bonds of the Compromise, turn with so much logic and safety, as to Daniel Webster?

CHAPTER XXVIII

A CANDIDATE'S BUSY WEEK

IN the dusty, ill-paved street before the Websters' temporary home in Louisiana Avenue, the spanking team of grays fretted. The house on D Street, between Fifth and Sixth, was being rebuilt. Expensive, but it could be sold to advantage when its owner moved into the White House. The next week would tell the tale. It was hot June and Washington panted for rain long withheld in the impermeable brass bowl of the sky.

Mr. Secretary Webster regarded the waiting equipage with the appreciative eye of a connoisseur. It merited every word that he had written to the generous donors from New York.

> "The carriage itself is thought to be as elegant as any ever seen in the country. It appears to be of exquisite workmanship, and is rich without being gaudy. It is very commodious, and its motion pleasant and agreeable.
>
> "The horses attached to the carriage are, I think, quite worthy of it. They are certainly uncommonly handsome, and their traveling and

action very fine. On the whole, gentlemen, I rather fear that this equipage is too splendid and superb for a plain farmer of Marshfield."

He recalled his letter with satisfaction; a graceful acknowledgment of a gracious gift. It gave the final touch to that luxury which had always been necessity in his life. The household was living freely and entertaining lavishly. He paid fifty dollars a month rental for the house alone—an extravagant price, but he could now afford it.

He shrank from the weary grind of the Department, the interminable letters to be answered, the endless petitions for jobs, only one-twentieth of which could be granted. How to refuse a group of endorsers without offending them and so forfeiting support—that was one of the eternal problems of statesmanship. It was difficult to settle one's mind to routine when only forty miles away the convention was gathering at Baltimore. Worse, he had let the affairs of the Department get into a muddle which he dreaded to face. He had been neglecting them, he supposed. Well, as soon as the nomination was over and the strain relieved, he would apply an undivided mind to the business of straightening everything out.

His secretary, Charles Lanman, stopped in on his way downtown to discuss the Democratic platform and nomination. Franklin Pierce had been nomi-

nated. He should be easy to beat. Who knew anything about him? That writer of romances, Nathaniel Hawthorne, was composing his campaign biography and would be hard put to it to gather any significant material. The platform was not so satisfactory; it had stolen the Webster thunder by calling for strict observance of the Compromise and deprecating any agitation of the Slavery question.

"That will compel our Whig convention to endorse the Compromise also," Mr. Webster foresaw. On the whole he was not ill-pleased. It might yet work out to excellent effect.

Often earlier in attendance than his subordinates, he found the pre-office hours best for work. But now as he entered the stuffy room he felt an individual distaste for every waiting letter and document on his desk. Insensibly and inevitably his mind drifted into calculations; his pencil traced and added figures. New England would stand by him, most of the States, at least. Maine was for Scott, but one of the delegates-at-large, George Evans, was his personal friend, and would naturally support him. Maine was the first state and Evans the first name in the polling. What an augury to start out in the lead!

The paper! He opened it feverishly. "Baltimore Convention: News of the New York delegation, the Virginia delegation, the Kentucky delegation, the New Jer—" Ah! there it was! The Massachusetts dele-

gation had taken a large room over the saloon of Carroll Hall "fitted up in good style by Mr. Rogers of the *Boston Evening Journal.*" Rogers knew how to handle such a situation. There would be plenty to eat and drink; open hospitality to all. Daniel Webster punch, he hoped; it would be appropriate and make a pleasant impression on the convivial Southerners.

Hot! Why shouldn't he send for the grays, get Zantzinger or George Abbott and drive up the river for an evening's fishing? No; he must not be so far away from the news. It would be two days, perhaps three before they got to the vote; but circumstances might arise in which his advice would be needed. A candidate "put himself into the hands of his friends"; that was a phrase. In a crisis one's own judgment must prevail. . . . He signed forty letters and told his head clerk not to disturb him before lunch. Unless, of course, some of his campaign lieutenants came in.

In the afternoon he had to see the President. He did not look forward to it. The White House itself depressed him, except as a symbol. It was cheerless, sparsely furnished, impersonal, with no air of peace or habitude. The Squire of Marshfield had a sound taste in household furnishings. He liked his surroundings to be solid, sober, plentiful and of the best finish. Under him that arid and chill atmosphere would take on a very different aspect.

President Fillmore was amiable enough. He al-

ways was. But there was some restraint between them. How could it be otherwise when each considered the other a chief rival? (Both were wrong, as the issue proved.) Happily there was little to be discussed; merely some details of England's bluff about the fisheries. Secretary Webster rather liked his Chief, though he thought him lacking in political acumen.

He dined, restless, at Gadsby's, drinking cautiously, for the warnings of the outspoken Dr. Jeffries were still influential. With the labors, dignities, and responsibilities of the White House ahead, he could not afford dissipation. Most of the hostesses had left town in the heat, but there were a few invitations for the evening. Should he take a hand at whist? Or poker? Or go to the Bentons' house? Or home? There might be important messages by the "lightning" from Baltimore. Telegraphs were costing him a mint of money, these days.

Messages were awaiting him, encouraging but of no great import. There was a letter, hand-delivered from the train, full of the kind of rumor that flies, wingless, on the multifarious breath of delegations. So-and-so had seen such-and-such-a-one and he had said this-and-that. The platform was to declare pro if it did not declare con on the moot questions. Mississippi was supposed to be wavering. The Ohio delegation was split. There had been a row in the New

York ranks; fisticuffs, some said. Deals were rumored on all sides.

The candidate passed a fitful night, until, toward morning, a thunder shower cleared the air. The papers confirmed some of the gossip in yesterday's letter. There was news, however, and of interest. The Massachusetts delegation had held a plan-and-scope meeting and decided that they had given way to the Southern Whig element long enough: they would hold out for their own man and their own platform. That was well; but they must be careful not to offend the South.

As it was so much cooler, he would walk to the Department. The streets through which he passed were muddy and ill-paved; broad and leading to magnificent distances, but scraggly with wide and diversely spaced houses. Somebody had said that a Washington avenue looked like an old man's mouth after a sidewalk dentist had finished with it. Not a pleasant simile, but a just one, the Secretary thought. And why, if there were to be street-lamps at all, did they not supply them in numbers enough to do something more than accentuate shadows? For a city of 40,000 the national Capital was peculiarly unkempt and ungrown-up. He thought with pride of the trim, prim orderliness which characterized his own Boston.

Near the Avenue he made a detour through a mean street. Not that he liked the street, but his more

direct way would have taken him past the auction block, and he had noted from the paper that a slave-sale was advertised for the morning. Sometimes these sales were said to be amusing; one auctioneer was reputed a most risible humorist; the best people attended, as on a fashionable show. But the living merchandise was too likely to furnish scenes far from humorous, that would spoil a man's musings for the day. This cursed trade in mankind! At least the Compromise had done something toward checking it in the District. Hurry as he would, the loud-bawled appeal of the auctioneer reached his ears:

"Who'll give me another bid on this hearty wench, gentlemen and ladies? Only five-fifty offered, and her as likely a girl as you'll find in the District."

His desk was heavy again with postponed work. There were several invitations to deliver addresses. With the convention out of the way he felt that he would be glad to take the rostrum again. After all that was his real *métier*. It was from that vantage-point that he could sway people to his views, beat down or persuade away mistrust and hostility. If only, after receiving the nomination, he could set himself before the people of every State in his own words! Nothing could then keep him from an overwhelming, almost a unanimous, victory.

Yet, perhaps he had overdone it. Ketchum, a shrewd political adviser, had written to Peter Harvey

in New England that there was a good chance of success, but: "Let not Mr. Webster make another speech." He added that this was the universal sentiment among their friends. Yes, the master of oratory admitted to himself, he had on occasions gone too far, been too disdainful, given too free a rein to his righteous wrath. It does not do, in politics, to lose one's temper. But the Abolitionists had goaded him beyond endurance. What was it that Concord fellow, R. W. Emerson, had called him? "A dead elephant." He would show that lot how far from dead he was. And what should a chilly philosopher—Mr. Emerson claimed to be a philosopher, he believed—know of statesmanship!

Peter Harvey, good, simple-hearted Peter whose dog-like fidelity and worship were a stable element in his life, was now in Baltimore to pick up what he could. There should be a letter from him. It came in on the second train. Good news! At the delegation meeting on the previous evening there had been two Southerners, a delegate from Kentucky and one from Louisiana. Surely that indicated the long awaited drift to him from the Slave States which he had so well served.

As against that, the *New York Herald* was now active for Scott. What else could one expect of that shifty sheet? It had abandoned Clay and advocated Fillmore; it had abandoned Fillmore and advocated Webster; it now abandoned Webster to push Scott.

The Secretary of State had heard, and believed it true, that Bennett's allegiance could be secured only by money. How different *The Sun*. It looked, editorially, to see "the first man as second choice" and the Webster cause, once under way, carrying the convention.

Surely that was Rufus Choate's voice outside; no mistaking those full, rich tones. Choate was to do the speech-making for him at Baltimore. Why did he not come in at once, instead of waiting in the anteroom? There was a reason. The Massachusetts delegate was talking earnestly with the devoted Lanman.

"What are our chances, Mr. Choate?"

"Of the slenderest, I fear."

"You have not come to tell Mr. Webster that?"

"Ought he not to be apprised of it?"

"I fear for the effect, Mr. Choate."

So the bearer of bad tidings put on a cheerful face for the benefit of his friend and principal.

"Massachusetts stands fast, Mr. Webster. You can trust us to the end."

"If Massachusetts sticks to her principles," returned the candidate, "the other States will rally to us in time and we shall lead to victory."

He went home elated and hopeful, but with every nerve strung to high tension. He tried to divert his mind by going over the notes for his projected book on General Washington. How appropriate to finish

it in the White House! Abbott called in from the Department, late in the afternoon.

"Grinnell of New York predicts your nomination on the first ballot."

"Is it published?"

"Yes. In two of the papers."

"That should have a favorable effect. Though it is, as you and I know, chimera."

"How can any one tell? I, for one, believe it may be so," said the faithful optimist.

"Not on the first ballot, George Abbott; not on the first ballot. Let us not delude ourselves with false hopes."

"Our Massachusetts friends, Mr. Webster, foresee a deadlock between President Fillmore and General Scott."

"That is also my view."

"Neither will yield to the other. In that event you will be the inevitable candidate."

"Let us say logical, George Abbott," smiled the great man.

The other advanced confirming arguments. "The President must stand by his friends who stand by him. But if he can not attain the goal, he will turn to you."

"His attitude has always been friendly," agreed the other.

"Mr. Clay has been advising the Southerners to support the President."

"Is that being generally said?"

"Such is the general belief, Mr. Webster. But, in the event of President Fillmore's withdrawal, whom else should he recommend but you by whose efforts his Compromise won?"

The great head shook in doubt. "Who can predicate Henry Clay's course?"

"Would it be profitable for me to call upon him?"

"He sees no one. He lies, they say, in his last illness."

"Our men are firm. They confidently expect a result within three days."

The candidate sighed. "I wish it were well over and done with."

He had at first declined an invitation for that night —a dinner at the Berrien mansion. It would be largely Southern. Washington society was completely controlled by the Slavery element. Well, he, Webster, had spent enough money in the last two years entertaining the Southerners to be entitled to some return. Doubt touched him as to whether that kind of social propaganda really accomplished anything in the voting column. They were courteous and hospitable, these people, but unless you spoke with their negro-softened accent you were always essentially an alien. Nevertheless he decided to go to the function.

Many pretty compliments of prediction were paid

him that night. Some came from the women-folk of politicians who were at that moment making slate and deciding men's future forty miles away. Toward the end of the evening the young wife of an Ohio Congressman passed him, openly crying. There was a hum of commentary behind her. The words "Abolitionist," "nigger-brother," buzzed like angry hornets. Her husband had committed the unpardonable social sin of Washington; he had brought up the Slavery question in conversation, and taken the anti side. As he joined his wife, she sobbed hysterically:

"You have ruined us. We shall never be invited to a stylish house again."

It gave Mr. Secretary Webster a chill thought in remembrance of certain too oratorical effusions of his against the now sacred institution. Did the South ever forget—or forgive?

Another restless night and little news to follow in the morning. The platform would probably contain a politic endorsement of the Compromise. That was ammunition for him. Webster men were quietly circulating the argument that he would draw many votes, if nominated, from Democratic admirers in the South who believed that section in debt to him for his aid in beating the Free Soilers. No other man except Clay himself could expect that vote of gratitude.

Upon his desk he found a clipping that made his heart leap—in the brief moment before comprehen-

sion dawned that he was reading prophecy, not news. It was in the *Chicago Journal's* highest style:

> "But hark! What mean those screams of ecstasy, ungovernable joy, that even now come almost prophetically to my ear? The eagle's screaming note it is, from Baltimore, as Webster is nominated and she plumes herself for victory. Amen!"

At least it was hopeful, that buoyant voice from Illinois. With a modicum of early support from the Middle West his position would be signally strengthened.

Two men stood near him at the Gadsby bar late that afternoon who either did not know him, which was incredible, or had not noticed him, which was improbable, or did not care. He could not help but overhear their conversation. One of them had either come from or had news from Baltimore.

"This man Choate, from Massachusetts," he said, "was claiming that Secretary Webster put through the Compromise. A delegate from the slavery States—I think it was South Carolina—stood up and shouted, 'It was Henry Clay of Kentucky.' "

"What happened?" asked his companion.

"Every one but the sour-faced Yankees clapped. You should have heard the Kentucky men yell."

The Secretary of State left his glass undrained, and

walked slowly out. Could that be true? If he was to be robbed of the credit which he deserved at the hands of the South—for what had Clay sacrificed by advancing the bill?—then, indeed, the prospect was dark. He awaited direct word. It came. The episode was minimized. There had been a roar of welcome for the name of Webster. He went to bed, feeling more cheerful. As he lay, wakeful, scanning columns of figures written upon the darkness, there floated in at his window a reckless chorus of young men's voices, in one of the Free Soil songs which those pestilent glee-men, the Hutchinsons, had made popular in the Harrison campaign. They ought to be arrested, those noisy disturbers, and probably would be, if the police heard what they were singing. Abolition music was not popular in Washington.

Speech-making had finally worn itself out at Baltimore; the balloting would begin with the morning session. If only for the appearance of the thing, some of his friends had gently hinted, Secretary Webster ought, perhaps, to be at his desk part of the day. Work was out of the question, but he could at least sign warrants and appointments. How was Mr. Fillmore taking it, he wondered. Quietly, he supposed. He had an enviable reserve force of calm, that man.

Fletcher Webster met his father at the Department. He was in cheerful spirits. Prospects were good. President Fillmore, he thought, would lead on the

first ballot, with General Scott close up. On succeeding ballots the soldier might gain a little. A see-saw between them would follow, with Webster steadily increasing his initial vote. Somewhere there would be a break in the ranks of the leading contenders; probably from the South. Thereafter it would be a swiftly mounting wave of enthusiasm for the Massachusetts statesman. Such was the forecast of wise brains at the scene of battle.

Early reports bore out part of the prediction. Between the President and Scott there was no choice nor immediate prospect of a choice. But Webster's vote was disappointing: Scott, 131; Fillmore, 133; Webster, 29. Less than thirty, and he had hoped for an opening vote of at least fifty. Where, then, was the supposed strength of his following in New York? Where was Maine? Where, above all, was the South? On the returns he could calculate little, if any, support outside of New England.

Further details did not come until afternoon. Mr. Webster's handful were holding fast; playing a waiting game. There were a few scattering ballots from New York. Scott had taken the lead. Maine had gone for him.

"Unanimously?" asked the incredulous candidate.

Yes, the vote was so reported.

"I could not have believed that George Evans would have gone against me," he said mournfully.

"But Senator Evans was instructed for General Scott," one of the little circle of his intimates pointed out. "Doubtless, after enough complimentary votes, he will seek release from his instructions."

"Anything from the South?"

"Not yet."

Night found the Whigs still deadlocked. With the morning, the balloting was resumed. The New England handful stuck doggedly to their man. He went from 29 to 31; back to 28. Then came a gleam of cheer; one California man and three Wisconsin delegates had come over to him. His total swelled to 32. Surely, he thought, when the telegraph bore the news, this must be the beginning of the tidal wave that was to sweep him into the White House on the ballots of a united and appeased Whig party. To make it the more hopeful, the leading candidates were performing a dogged see-saw; now five votes apart, now three, again only one. It looked like one of those deadlocks, held fast by the passionate obstinacy of personal partisanship, which, when they break, break like a dam, sweeping both sides away on the flood. And Massachusetts was standing fast, with the rest of New England, except recalcitrant Maine, behind her. Another encouraging message arrived. Between roll calls a Southern man had leapt upon his chair and shouted:

"Nominate Webster and I'll support him and Jones of Texas."

THE DISILLUSIONED

From a daguerreotype taken in 1850 by Southworth & Hawes, Boston, Mass.

(*Courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society*)

Applause had greeted this, but no votes followed. When were the Southern Whigs going to start that long-delayed Webster movement which had been held out to him as an expectancy if not a promise in the conference before the Seventh of March Speech?

A disquieting rumor was buzzing around the Department. Men scowled as they gave ear to it. Mr. Webster insisted on hearing it. Reluctantly the good Zantzinger, his companion on many a fishing trip, told him. Something had been going on in the Fillmore camp overnight. Rufus Choate, who had been orating mightily for the Great Defender, hurried over to the New York headquarters; hastened back to Washington; went to see the President. He could get no satisfaction for all his pleas and arguments on behalf of his man. Evil report had it that Fillmore was almost ready to release his delegates to "Old Fuss and Feathers" Scott. Webster refused to be discouraged. Released, the Southern followers of the President would pay that deferred debt of gratitude and declare for the Secretary of State.

"Scott, 142; Fillmore, 122; Webster, 28," came the "lightning's" dismal news of the fateful fiftieth ballot.

Bad, indeed! Twenty votes lead for the third-rate military hero. Then came the clincher; the desertion of the illustrious New Englander by his native state, New Hampshire, with Vermont following in the path

of betrayal. On the fifty-third roll-call, General Scott was nominated with 150 votes. A faithful 21 stuck to Webster to the end.

It was all over. Daniel Webster, the man, could only stand by and suffer, while Daniel Webster, the statesman, saw his superb and hopeful career finally shattered at the hands of "that great body of implacable enemies who have prevented me from being the President of the United States."

One must put a good face even upon death. Composed, firm of jaw, but with eyes in which the light had dimmed, the defeated man went home to prepare a gallant statement for the press. Well he knew what he must presently endure. Cheering delegations would visit him with empty compliment and meaningless acclaim.

That evening a brass band turned the corner of the Avenue and advanced upon his rented house. Cheers and cries of "Webster!" "Daniel Webster!" "Three cheers for the real author of the Compromise!"

He came out in his dressing gown, smiling, in perfect command of himself, and delivered a little speech which he had already transmitted to the Baltimore papers by train.

"Gentlemen, the convention, I daresay, did its best, exercised its wisest and soundest discretion,

and for my part I have no personal feelings in the matter. There is not one among you who will sleep better to-night than I shall. I shall rise to-morrow morning with the lark, and though he is a better songster than I am, yet I shall greet the purple east as jocund, as gratified, and as satisfied as he."

But it was to a group of Southern men that he expressed the deathly bitterness of his soul, when they who had given him unstinted applause but withheld so much as an iota of aid in return for his sacrifice of creed and principle, stopped at his house to express formally their admiration and friendship. He told them that he accepted the verdict of the convention and the party. He regretted that their policy had been thought necessary, only because it would write a false chapter in the nation's history. By the record it appeared that in all the numerous ballotings, the Southern delegates had failed to cast their votes for him even after the hope of success for their favorite candidate had been abandoned; but the causes—he paused, and his regard was heavy and sorrowful and accusing upon them—the causes that prevented them from coming to his support were not of record. He supposed he would have to submit quietly to this apparent reflection on his public life.

"Mississippi knows what you have done for the

South, sir," called Captain Freeland, a delegate from that State.

The disappointed man stepped forward into the light and they saw that his eyes were swollen, his face puffy.

"But, gentlemen, you did not show your appreciation by voting for me. Not so much as one of you. I would rather have had the record of your complimentary vote than the nomination itself."

And, so the shocked and abashed Mississippian records, "he turned away, boo-hooing out loud."

The crowd dispersed without a cheer. They had witnessed the death of a career.

Far into the morning Daniel Webster sat at his window seeking coolness. The path ahead, short though it might be, looked so lonely. Few of his old associates were left. Mason was dead. Smith was dead. Story was dead. Zeke, best of brothers, was alive only in memory. Ike Hill, that ancient enemy, won to recent friendship, was dead. John Marshall, who had first foreseen young Congressman Webster's greatness, was long dead. Calhoun, grim and chivalrous foeman, was gone. Clay's life was but a feeble flicker. Randolph was a dim, piping ghost. Biddle, the high emperor of finance, had passed. So had Hayne—Adams—Jackson—Kent—friend and foe; all, all were gone, the old, familiar faces. A new generation was coming to the fore that knew not Joseph.

A wakened bird fretted in the black mass of a near-by tree. A waft of coolness came from the Potomac. The old, weary man's heart swelled with a faithful longing. Marshfield and the sea! the sea!

What else was left to him?

CHAPTER XXIX

AN OLD MAN COMES HOME

AS he had so movingly asked the Faneuil Hall Whigs, "Where am I to go?" so Webster might now put the question to the unkind Fates. He was suffering from that puzzled torment of spirit with which ingratitude afflicts some minds. "The result of the Baltimore convention is certainly bad enough," he complained. "It shows a great deal of folly and a great deal of infidelity." In Washington he could not escape the constant reminders of misplaced sympathy. "I meet here so many causes of vexation and humiliation growing out of the events connected with the convention," that he hesitated whether to "go abroad or into obscurity." Political ambition he had abandoned. "I have given my life to law and politics; law is uncertain and politics is utterly vain." Unable to rally his spirits from the shock of this final and irreparable catastrophe, he wanted only to be far from all that would recall it to his lacerated memory.

Meeting him alone in a corridor of the Astor House, Charles Stetson, the owner of the hotel and the devoted friend of the Massachusetts statesman, asked him:

"Is all right with you *here*, Mr. Webster?" at the same time laying his hand over his own heart.

"Yes, sir," came the low-voiced answer. "I am too near God to have a single heart-burning against a human creature, but I have a chagrin as profound as my entire nature, and it is that after having performed my duty to my Southern brethren, they had neither the courage nor the kindness to place me on the record of that convention."

Scott he simply would not swallow, as the nominee. Victory with such a candidate, on a shilly-shally platform, he believed impossible, and rightly. Better vote for Pierce, who, at least, represented something other than a timorous expediency. It was the first time he had bolted. The Whigs were violent over his defection. To be known as a friend of his was to incur suspicion. When Seward defended the diplomatic record of the Secretary of State against unjust aspersions, an act of generosity which Webster warmly acknowledged, his advocacy was criticized. "Even my friends in Boston complain of my having praised Mr. Webster," he observes.

President Fillmore would have appointed the defeated man to the Court of St. James's. But how could he afford to accept it? It was a rich man's plum.

"Mr. Abbott Lawrence expends seventy thousand dollars a year in sustaining the dignity of this posi-

tion," he said to Peter Harvey. "I am without means to meet any expenditure beyond the salary."

"Your numerous friends will never permit your individual resources to be exhausted," returned the adoring and obsequious biographer; "and I am authorized to say that whatever funds are necessary will be promptly supplied."

What followed is embalmed in the record of the incredibly naïve Peter. Remember; it is the eternal beneficiary and unashamed mendicant to whom the lofty sentiments are attributed: " 'Sir,' he said with a sternness never before displayed to me, 'I duly appreciate the kindness and liberality of my friends, but I cannot consent to be their pensioner. Never repeat such a suggestion.' "

"I still shudder at the recollection of his indignation," writes the object of this noble scorn.

A strange morality show, this, another phase of the Websterian bluff which we have already seen, directed also at Harvey, who seems to have been a sort of whipping-boy for the great man's histrionic indignation, in the absurd tale of his overawing Pinkney to abject apologies. Knowing himself sneered at as the tool of State Street, dubbed "the merchants' pet," Webster must prove himself superior to such dross. Hence this puppet-exhibition wherein he pulls the strings of his own fine action for the behoof of his audience of two, himself and Peter the Ingenuous.

It is to be feared that some of his former benefactors had grown too little considerate of his dignity in these days of his decline; he was not without galling reminders of the terms of his servitude from those who paid the score. He was one day accosted by a rich constituent, one of the "short-legged, sixty-day fellows with their three days' grace" whereof he had spoken to Dr. Ruggles with so wry a face.

"I hear that you are going to England, Mr. Webster. What for, Mr. Webster: what for?"

"I am going, sir, to see the Duke of Devonshire."

"Why, Mr. Webster? Why do you wish to see the Duke of Devonshire?"

Turning upon his interrogator the black stare of the "great stone face," Webster boomed out, "Because, sir, because he never made a bargain in his life."

England was not for him. It is doubtful whether he really wanted it. Money was on his mind again, and more than that, on his conscience. He did not blame himself for what he regarded as his undeserved misfortunes; he only regretted that he had not been born a miser, attributing most of his troubles in life to ill-advised investments. But there is the ring of sincerity in his asseveration: "If I can pay my debts, I shall die in peace, a happy man." Some few personal loans he actually did return. The total of his obligations was, of course, beyond any reasonable hope of

adjustment. Only scattered figures are available, but the total must have run, I think, to one hundred thousand dollars or more.

An opportunity to settle some of his more pressing obligations was afforded by an important retainer. That queer, fanatic genius of "elastic metal," Charles Goodyear, after manufacturing and patenting shoes, coats, tents, life-preservers, forks, sails and furniture out of rubber which froze in winter, melted in summer and stank like a family of polecats in humidity (he wrote a book about his product which he printed on rubber paper and bound in rubber covers), had proved a poorer business man than even a genius has a right to be and had let many of his patents slip through his fingers. Those who acquired them found themselves in a mess of litigation over proprietorship and infringements. Thereupon they sought the legal services of the Secretary of State. His Departmental affairs were in arrears; his political plans engrossed him; but there was a fee of $10,000, a bonus of $5,000 and an additional incentive in the form of $1,000 extra offered by an interested though non-participating party in New York as a spur to victory.

The propriety of a high Government official leaving his duties to undertake private and profitable activities might be questioned to-day. There seems to have been no cavil over it then. President Fillmore

was complaisant. Whatever touches of conscience he himself may have had were put aside.

> "It is an unfortunate season of the year [he wrote to Peter Harvey] and my duties at Washington are pressing; but really I do not see how I am to forego the fee. This fee I must have, for it will pay the $15,000 of my debts; and that is what I am striving to do; it is what, if my life is spared, I mean to do."

So Webster, the statesman, reverted once more to Webster the lawyer, and won a signal victory.

As head of the Cabinet and in the way of receiving important information, he was in a position to pay in service what he could not in money and make suitable return for some of the favors which he had solicited. For example, it is difficult to estimate the value to an active financier of an advance tip on a Supreme Court decision. Such a forecast Secretary of State Webster transmitted to Banker Haven with the caution:

> "This information is strictly confidential—being so given to me: as you are my other self, it is no breach of confidence to let the soul know what the ear heareth."

To the same benefactor: a message underscored throughout:

"Mr. Ashmun leaves for home this afternoon. He has seen many persons and conversed with them from the lowest to the *Highest* [we may guess that it is the President, not the Deity, who is thus capitalized] and he thinks the coast will be clear and know to be clear in due time."

Which may possibly have been proper enough, but the postscript suggests misgivings on the part of the writer.

"I must pray you not to give a single hint to any living person of what is contained in the lines which I have underscored."

Rumors of such connections could not but affect his reputation. Scandal brushed him again with its tainted wing. Congressman Allen of Massachusetts charged that there was a direct bargain between the Secretary and the financial clique whereby Webster was to advocate the Mexican indemnity being handled through a bankers' syndicate, they agreeing to raise $25,000 in State Street, Boston, and $25,000 in Wall Street, New York, for him. This sounds suspiciously like a rehash of the old "memorial" fund charge. It did not greatly discompose the accused. True, he was doing what he could to forward the Mexican settlement. That was the part of sound statesmanship. That he held some of the scrip had no bearing upon

the question. He would have taken the same course in any case.

The histrionic love of public appearance, that practice of the subtler magic which only dominant orators know, reasserted its sway over his spirit. He had lost little of his fire and less of his power to attract and compel audiences. Though a waning star in the political heavens, he was still the most admired and sought-after speaker in the country. When an address by him was announced by the New York Historical Society, one hundred dollars was offered for a seat, a price hardly surpassed by the records of a heavyweight championship fight of to-day. His disquisition at the Cooper Memorial meeting delighted the crowd, though it rather scandalized the literati, who thought that he should know something of his subject. In these latter days he could descend from Olympian heights to turn a glozing compliment. At a Faneuil Hall meeting, having espied from the platform the aged form of the Hon. Thomas J. Perkins, he adjured him to rise and "show his benevolent countenance to this crowd of his fellow-citizens." The old gentleman, having, with some signs of embarrassment, complied, Mr. Webster delivered this "werry pretty sentiment":

> "God bless him! He is an honor to his city, an honor to his State and an honor to his country. His memory will be perfumed by his benevolent

actions, and go down as a sweet odor to our children's children."

One of Mr. "Long Tom" Perkins's benevolent actions, by the way, had been a liberal contribution to the Webster "memorial" fund.

Solid Men of Boston had their faults, doubtless. Disloyalty was not one of them. Daniel Webster was still to them the godlike one, the Illustrious Defender of the Constitution, the upholder of the dignity and honor of Massachusetts. He who deserved better of his nation and his party, had been disabused of his life-long hope. He wished a nomination; a nomination he should have. They knew as well as Emerson that he was, indeed, "a dead elephant." But he was *their* dead elephant and not to be buried without all due honors. A petition had been put into circulation in the previous year. Rufus Choate, Charles A. White, Franklin Haven, Edward Everett, Peter Harvey, George T. Curtis, and others helped to organize a bolt from Scott. Electoral tickets were put out in New York and Massachusetts. The Boston Whigs supplied a plank for the platform in their declaration: "Of this bill [the Clay Compromise] Daniel Webster, with the concurrence of Henry Clay and other profound statesmen, was the author." This could not hurt Clay's feelings, since he was dead. But Tom Corwin is reported to have commented upon reading it:

"And I, with the concurrence of Moses and some extra help, wrote the Ten Commandments."

Arrangements were made to have the Secretary of State come to Boston to receive his honors. There was a splendid parade and reception; scarlet coats and gold wands, the National Lancers for escort, a salvo of cannon, peals of bells, famous bands, State Street decked in bunting and flags, the guest in an open barouche, drawn by six nobly caparisoned grays; and in the seat with the great man the secret, sleek, glossy, kind Franklin Haven. Few knew him. He was taken for an alderman, representing the city in an official capacity. He smiled and applauded when the crowd shouted its acclaim.

The barouche drew up at the decorated stand. Helpful hands boosted the pale, flabby, drawn old man to the platform. He looked down upon the expanse of welcoming faces with eyes in which the luster had died.

"Here in Boston I am not disowned," he murmured dolorously. "Here at least I am not disowned."

His office was still open. Again he paced the streets of his chosen city, and there was reënacted the old scene:

> "Business was brought to an absolute standstill. As the whisper passed along, the windows filled with clerks, pen in mouth, peering out to catch a

glimpse of the man whom they had seen fifty times before; while the banners and merchants hastened forth to give him salutation or exchange a passing word, happy if they could but catch his eye."

Here, at least, Daniel Webster would never be disowned.

He went back to Washington and the accumulated muddle of the State Department; struck out a spark of the old fire once and again over the assertion of American rights. But the mind was wearying; the heart was sick. Back to Marshfield he came, and now we have an altered picture of him as he visited Boston, walking feebly along State Street, with an arm behind him.

"His hat was pulled low over his brow and he seemed anxious to escape the notice of the crowd that gathered."

He whose glory it was to march, ever, as to the triumphal measure of loud popularity!

Tradition has it that Longfellow, seeing him thus, stored the unforgettable picture in his mind and, long years after, gave it magnificent setting in his "Michael Angelo:"

Life hath become to me
An empty theatre,—its lights extinguished,
The music silent, and the actors gone;

> And I alone sit musing on the scenes
> That once have been. I am so old that Death
> Oft plucks me by the cloak, to come with him;
> And some day, like this lamp, shall I fall down
> And my last spark of life will be extinguished.

There had been an accident, a fall from a carriage, from which he rallied with unexpected resiliency. From outer hurts he could recover; the inner hurt to the spirit was undermining him.

Marshfield called him back, for the end.

CHAPTER XXX

A LOWERED FLAG

My flag shall fly
And my light shall burn
As long as my life shall last.

SEPTEMBER at Marshfield. The trees, which had been planted a quarter of a century before by the new and exultant squire of the estate, had put on their autumn glory. Crimson patches glowed like set flame on the marsh. Quail called in the scrub and peeps sounded their tiny and plaintive whistle along the curve of the beach. The air pulsed with the rut of the sea, slowly, deeply rhythmic after storm. It was one of those warm, still smoky days when cod and halibut were lurking on Ned's Ground and further along the greasy "slick" on the surface showed where the blue tigers of the sea were slaughtering their prey and leaving half the oily bodies to the screaming gulls.

An old, sick, happy man sat in a boat under an awning with Durf Hatch and Dwelly Baker, his swollen hands nervous and quick with the apprehension of the born angler to feel the tug which tells that the quarry has hooked on. Daniel Webster had come home to rest.

Work followed him and he faced it manfully and conscientiously. When he found himself unable to remain longer at Washington, he offered to resign, but President Fillmore declined to accept the sacrifice. There was gentleness and sympathy in Fillmore. He did not need to be told that the Secretary who had twice served his country as the head of its most important department, would wish to die in harness. Whatever of estrangement or suspicion may have existed between the two disappointed politicians, had ebbed away. Fillmore wrote warmly, concernedly, about his subordinate's health, and Webster replied in a tone which, from one of his practiced austerity of expression, is significant:

> "Your letters are always kind. I am in the hands of God, and may He preserve and bless you and yours forever more.
>
> "DAN'L WEBSTER."

Little rancor was left in him for any man. "My friends have done what they could and no man will ever hear me complain," he told Franklin Haven. To the campaign he paid no heed. Nor was he interested in the direct proffer of the mission to the Court of St. James's. His friends thought it would be a descent. He was still "thought to be the first farmer of Marshfield, South Parish," and content in that distinction.

He had sloughed off the irritant penalties of publicity. His last public speech had been, appropriately, to his neighbors. He spoke briefly and in neighborly fashion, avoiding controversial topics, speaking of the fisheries question which was so near to their lives. It was a strain upon him; too much of a strain, though, indeed, that did not matter now. His neighbors, farmers and fishermen, came often to see him and pay their respects. He liked that.

For a year his health had been gradually failing. What he called his "catarrh"—it was actually an obstinate asthma—racked him. His chronic diarrhea now alternated with severe constipation. Cirrhosis of the liver set in. * Probably there were kidney complications also, as his arms and legs swelled, a condition which he stoically tried to conceal lest it worry his friends and family. Throughout he quietly fought his fight with uncomplaining fortitude and grim good humor. Toward his last adversary he exhibited the same serenity which he had shown to his earlier opponents.

His mind was at peace. Fletcher's future had always been a matter of concern, but now that the exhausted old statesman's friends rallied to him with eager and generous offers of help, he felt assured that they would not let his son and his son's family suffer

* Those who professed to believe that he died a drunkard's death are in error. Contrary to general belief, cirrhosis of the liver is not the Nemesis of the heavy drinker, and probably has no connection with alcoholic excess.

want. An anonymous benefactor sent down a considerable sum of cash in order that current expenses might be met without embarrassment. The sick man still thought of finances, and one of his last letters urbane, almost apologetic, is written to the New York client who promised him a contingent fee of $1,000 for winning the Goodyear suit, and then neglected to pay it.

Toward the end of the month an offering of real estate, fifty rich acres near at hand, came into the market at the bargain price of $20 an acre. The old, ineradicable land-lust flared up in the Squire of Marshfield. That parcel he must have. But—a thousand dollars? No such sum was in his possession. He did not let that discourage him. He drew a check for the amount on Franklin Haven's bank and wrote Haven to see that the cashier honored it; a fee for that amount (the Goodyear contingency) would be coming in within a week. He did not live to receive it.

When he could no longer lurch down the stairs at sunrise and totter out to rub the noses of his oxen and feed hard corn to his prize cows, he lay down, not to die but to live as long as he might. Below his windows was a small pond, an in-branch of the sea. His little sloop rode at anchor there. Secretly he wrote a memorandum. Durf Hatch was to run up the American flag to the masthead, and burn a riding-light there

from dark to dawn so that, wakeful, he might see it. He wrote shakily:

> "My lamp shall burn and my
> flag shall fly as long as my
> life lasts."

The weary brain had stumbled, trying for the rhythm of an old English sailor-song. Twenty-four hours before the end he admitted with composure that he would die soon. He was without fear. Religion had been little more than a formality, albeit correctly observed, in his life. But if not a pious practitioner, he was an earnest and most orthodox believer, and he now "read his title clear." His death was protracted and difficult, for while mind and soul accepted the call with equanimity, the powerful body which had withstood the inroads of disease for so long, still fought on, painfully, indomitably.

Dying words of great men, reported to history, are not to be implicitly trusted. They are too commonly contributed by loyal friends whom the pious and mortal occasion has tempted to the employment of the noble epigram. Thus we have a wide choice of Webster sayings appropriate to the death-bed. There is the inevitably religious; there is the patriotic; there is the family farewell; there is the literary which devoted his final breath to the faint request, "Poetry." And

there is that dire and detailed effort of pomp and priggery which gives us the following colloquy:

Webster: Friends, wife, doctor, son, family, are you all there?

Chorus: We are here.

Webster: Have I on this occasion—have I said anything unworthy of Daniel Webster?

Chorus: No, no!

He then dies in peace.

The most probable version and the one best attested is that he said, just before falling into a coma, "I still live," and one commentator adds an explanation. The watching doctor had directed an attendant:

"If he is alive in an hour, give him brandy."

Thereupon, the dying man, after a period which might or might not have been an hour, said with the ghost of a smile:

"I still live."

Whether or not this is authentic, it is certainly in the character of his sly and faintly satirical humor when dealing with his own foibles.

The light was burning and the flag flying at masthead when he died at two o'clock in the morning of October 24th.

They buried him in the Marshfield land which was the passion, the satisfaction, and the delight of his life. The grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the neighbors who loved and revered him still visit

his grave. Few great men have ever been personally missed and mourned as he was by so many simple folk.

News reached the general public tardily in the early Fifties, notwithstanding the service of the "lightning." One hundred thousand American citizens supported the candidacy of Daniel Webster at the polls in November. Among them were many Southerners, Alexander H. Stephens, afterward Vice-President of the Confederacy, for one. The recognition came too late to assuage that "chagrin as profound as my entire nature."

Webster was in his grave when the first presidential votes ever cast for him were registered.

THE END